ETHEL CHURCHILL

OR,

THE TWO BRIDES.

BY THE AUTHOR OF

"THE IMPROVVISATRICE," "FRANCESCA CARRARA
"TRAITS AND TRIALS OF EARLY LIFE,"

ETC. ETC.

"Yet knowing something—dimly though it be,
And, therefore, still more awful—of that strange
And most tumultuous thing, the heart of man.
It chanceth oft that, mix'd with nature's smiles,
My soul beholds a solemn quietness
That almost looks like grief, as if on earth
There were no perfect joy, and happiness—
Still trembled on the brink of misery."—*Wilson*

IN TWO VOLUMES.

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PREFACE.

THERE is one portion of a Work which, more than all others, marks the difference between the reader and the writer. It is the first read, and the last written; the one which the reader dismisses the most hastily, and the writer lingers upon longest. The Preface is the seal of separation between yourself and a Work that must have been the chief object of many days. The excitement of composition is over, and you begin to doubt and to despond. I cannot understand a writer growing indifferent from custom or success. Every new Work must be the record of much change in the mind which produces it, and there is always the anxiety to know how such change will be received. It is impossible, also, for the feeling of your own moral responsibility not to increase. At first you write eagerly, composition is rather a passion than a power; but, as you go on, you cannot but find that to write a book, is a far more serious charge than it at first appeared. Faults have been pointed out, and you are desirous of avoiding their recurrence; praise has been bestowed, and you cannot but wish to show that it has not been given in vain.

Encouragement is the deepest and dearest debt that a writer can incur. Moreover, you have learned that opinions are not to be lightly put forth, when there is even a chance of such opinions being material wherewith others will form their own. I never saw any one reading a volume of mine without almost a sensation of fear. I write every day more earnestly and more seriously. To show the necessity of a strong and guiding principle; to put in the strongest light, that no vanity, no pleasure, can ever supply the place of af-

fection; to soften and to elevate,—has been the object of the following pages. I know too well that I cannot work out my own ideal, but I deeply feel that it is the beautiful and the true.

The greater part of these volumes has been written when in very wretched health;—may I urge it as a plea for the continuance of that kindly indulgence which has so often excited both my hope and my gratitude?

ETHEL CHURCHILL.

CHAPTER I.

AGE AND YOUTH.

"I tell thee," said the old man, "what is life.
A gulf of troubled waters—where the soul,
Like a vexed bark, is tossed upon the waves,
Of pain and pleasure, by the wavering breath
Of passions. They are winds that drive it on,
But only to destruction and despair.
Methinks that we have known some former state
More glorious than our present; and the heart
Is haunted by dim memories—shadows left
By past felicity. Hence do we pine
For vain aspirings—hopes that fill the eyes
With bitter tears for their own vanity.
Are we then fallen from some lovely star,
Whose consciousness is as an unknown curse?"

"AND yet, you chose to marry him!"

"I did and should marry him again; but bear with me for this night, dearest uncle, as you have often borne."

The old man's answer was to pass his hand caressingly over the beautiful head that rested on the arm of his chair, and his niece continued.

"My spirits are overcast with a sadness which I have not hitherto known, and inexplicable too. Did I believe in omens, I should say that my depression was ominous."

"It is the idea of departure—but you always wished to visit London."

"And wish it still; but I knew not, up to the hour of parting, how much it would cost me to sever myself from my kind, my only friend."

"You have your husband, Henrietta;" but the expression

which accompanied the sentence was half sarcastic, half distrustful.

A still deeper shade of doubt past across the high and finely cast features of the youthful female.

"You have, from my cradle, impressed upon me the folly of love: and so far as my knowledge goes, it goes with you. All the affairs of the heart that I have witnessed, have excited but my wonder or contempt; nor could I ever understand what people see so charming in each other. I could no more pass hours away, like dear Ethel, in imagining perfection in a nameless boy, than I could yield up all my faculties to the arrangement of colours in an endless Penelope-pleasing piece of embroidery; perhaps I am too quick-sighted for the delusions of love."

"Be your eyes never dimmed then," said the listener bitterly.

"Yet, if I put love out of the question, I could wish for something like affection; for, much as it accords with Hamlet, and with usage, to be 'a little more than kin, and less than kind,' still, Lord Marchmont's coldness oftentimes comes over me with the effect of suddenly rounding a headland in one of our valleys, and finding the north wind full in my face. He takes not the slightest interest in aught I say, and I have continually thoughts and feelings which I am restless to communicate. Here I do not feel this"—and she turned towards him her glistening eyes—"for my own dear uncle will always hearken to me, explain, encourage, and show me how to comprehend others and myself. But, far away from him, surrounded by new scenes, filled with fresh impressions, longing to clothe in utterance all the bursting thoughts they will excite, must I be lastingly condemned to a silent life, and a closed heart."

"Better keep them so for ever. Wherefore unlock to others treasures priceless to yourself, and valueless to them, unless the disclosure serve to render you their dupe and victim."

"How differently, my uncle, do we view the world!"

"The difference lies but in knowledge. I know that world—you know it not."

"Nay, I have learned it from yourself, and experience teaches well."

"Ay; but before we profit, the experience must be our own. A few short years, Henrietta! for, to a temper such as yours, life gives its lessons quickly; and we shall think but too much alike. I may not live to see it, but the time must come—and,

ah! how soon—when you will commune with yourself in the solitude, perhaps, of this very chamber, and admit, 'gloomy as were my uncle's views of existence, the reality is yet more dark.' "

"Oh, no! Fate cannot but have made an exception in my favour. Is there a single advantage that Fortune has not blest me with—young, high-born, married to one of England's richest and proudest peers, handsome, clever—is it not so? At morn I shall go hence, and, what sort of triumph and pleasure can I anticipate at the metropolis?"

"And you will find both; but, alas! human enjoyment is all too dearly atoned. The ancients gave the balance of life to a dark goddess, who, following in the track of fortune, as the shadow follows the sunshine, enforces bitter payment for our few and transitory delights. Nothing is good, but evil comes thereof. I took you, Henrietta, when an infant, from your dying mother's arms. Your cradle was placed in my laboratory; and often have I closed the midnight volume, to watch the fitful slumbers of your childhood. I have since given you all I had to give, my time, my knowledge; and for your sake loved on—hoped on. And now, that you are my sweet and intelligent companion, and my whole heart is bound up in you—your smile my all of sunshine, your step my only music—you must leave me; and to a solitude saddened by the remembrance of a beloved one, who never more can be what she has been to its lonely and weary occupant."

The young countess sprang from her seat, and threw herself at the old man's knees, which she fondly clasped.

"No, no, my more, my more dear than father, I will not leave you. How vain, how selfish have I been! Why did you suffer me to marry—nay, what is Lord Marchmont to me? I will stay here happy, ah, too happy, in devoting all life to the debt of gratitude—nay, not gratitude, of love—that I owe to you."

Sir Jasper struggled for a moment,—'twas only for a moment—and the strong emotion was subdued.

"Not thus, my sweet child; the laws of Nature are immutable; and they have decreed that the young bird shall leave the nest. Do not weep, my beloved girl: of what avail were it to keep you here until your loveliness and youth had departed. Even with your gladdening presence, I cannot now number many years; and to feel that I was leaving you lonely and defenceless—unpractised, too, in that world which re-

quires all youth's energies to encounter—would embitter even the pang of death! No—my best beloved Henrietta—I would have you form new ties, and other friends. The rare advantages of youth pass rapidly away, and my darling must enjoy them while she may. Her old uncle will not be forgotten. You will write to me often; and I shall still feel and think with you:" and, bending down, he kissed the sweet eyes that were looking up at him with such sad tenderness.

For a long time they sat in unbroken silence, and neither looked upon the other. Each gazed at the surrounding objects, and alike beheld them not. They saw but with the heart's eyes, and these turn on an inward world.

There are in existence two periods when we shrink from any great vicissitude—early youth and old age. In the middle of life, we are indifferent to change; for we have discovered that nothing is, in the end, so good or so bad as it at first appeared. We know, moreover, how to accommodate ourselves to circumstances; and enough of exertion is still left in us to cope with the event.

But age is heart-wearied and tempest-torn: it is the crumbling cenotaph of fear and hope! Wherefore should there be turmoil for the few, and evening hours, when all they covet is repose? They see their shadow fall upon the grave; and need but to be at rest beneath!

Youth is not less averse from change; but that is from exaggeration of its consequences, for all seems to the young so important, and so fatal. They are timid, because they know not what they fear; hopeful, because they know not what they expect. Despite their gayety of confidence, they yet dread the first plunge into life's unfathomed deep.

Thus it was with Henrietta. She knew more of the world than most women of her years; for her converse had been chiefly with her uncle, a man of remarkable endowments; and she had read an infinite variety of books—read them, too, with that quick perception which seizes motive and meaning with intuitive accuracy.

Such, however, inevitably is half knowledge; and theory that lacks the correction of practice, is as the soul without the body.

In common with all of her impassioned temper, and sensitive feelings, she had much imagination. She had created a world which she was resolved to realize—a world where beauty was power, whose luxuries were poetry, and to whose triumphs she gave all the brilliant colouring of hope. Who, in after life,

can help smiling at the fancies in which early anticipation revelled; how absurd, how impossible, do they not now appear! Yet, in such mockery lurks much of bitterness: the laugh rings hollow from many a disappointment, and many a mortification.

Henrietta had all this to acquire, and was taking on that very evening one of her first lessons in experience. Contrary to their wont, her wishes were at variance with themselves—the past and the future contended in her. Impatient to enter the "new more magnificent world," on whose threshold she now stood, she was yet withheld by all the tenderest recollections of her childhood. She could not brook the thought of abandoning her uncle, as his long and gloomy evenings arose sadly before her, she saw him wandering all solitary through their favourite walks—sitting down to his lonely meals—watching by himself the dim hearth, and thinking continually of her. She raised not her eyes, but every object was distinctly visible to them, and woke a train of association which gave her the keenest pain. Never had the place seemed to her so gloomy; and all therein was so characteristic of its master.

It was a large vaulted apartment, and had been once a chapel; but it was now half library, half laboratory. The arches were formed of black oak, hewn into all the fantastic shapes of Gothic imaginings; in which it was singular to note that all the natural imitations were graceful, while those of humanity were hideous. The oak-leaf and the garland mingled grotesquely with the distorted faces, that ever and anon peeped from among their wreaths.

The walls were entirely hidden by book-shelves, or by cases containing rare specimens of fossil bones and reptile skeletons. Here was a grisly crocodile, its teeth white and sharp as when they glistened in the waters of the Nile; there, a massy serpent, knotted into huge and hideous contortions; while myriads of small snakes, lizards, and disgusting insects, were stored around, with a care which had obtained for Sir Jasper Meredith, among his neighbours, the reputation of a magician, though they were but the sickly fancies of a heart ill at ease, that mocked itself in its pursuits.

The ceiling had been painted with the martyrdom of some saint. Who shall place a bound to human folly, when both the inflicter and the endurer of torture have deemed that pain is acceptable in the sight of God? The tints had long since faded from the ceiling, and in the twilight nothing was discernible

save two or three wild and ghastly faces, far less like "spirits of health," than "goblins damned!"

On the carpet, at the hearth, basked, in a wood-fire's heat, three enormous and black cats, the predilection for which, instead of for dogs, the usually chosen companions of country gentlemen, further increased the belief in Sir Jasper's unholy studies.

The reason given for this preference, was tinctured with the same morbid perversity that had its source in early disappointment.

"I like a cat," he would say, "because it does not disguise its selfishness with any flattering hypocrisies. Its attachment is not to yourself, but to your house. Let it but have food, and a warm lair among the embers, and it heeds not at whose expense. Then it has the spirit to resent aggression. You shall beat your dog, and he will fawn upon you; but a cat never forgives: it has no tender mercies, and it torments before it destroys its prey."

The landscape from the oriel window, in which they were now seated, was quite in accordance with Sir Jasper's professed tastes.

It fronted the bleakest part of the coast, a desolate heath, which was relieved only by a few stunted trees, and became gradually merged in the sands. An undulating purple line, which was "earth's great antagonist," the sea, closed the distance.

On the horizon rested heavy masses of cloud, broken by red gleams of dying sunset, which, as its vivid colours parted the darkening vapours but to disappear, showed like some gallant spirit struggling vainly with the pressure of adversity, and yielding one energy after another, as it sank beneath some last misfortune, heavier than all before.

As yet, the crimson hues flitted around, rendering distinct first one object and then another. They settled now upon the two that watched them from that oriel window.

The aged man was leaning back in a quaintly embossed oaken chair, on whose carving the arms of his family were gorgeously painted and inlaid. In youth he must have been singularly handsome, but years and care had left their vestiges on his noble features, which were thin even to emaciation. You might almost see the veins flow under the sunken temples. Scarcely a hue of life hovered on that wan cheek and lip, and his extreme paleness was heightened by a profusion of black

hair, from whence time had not taken a shade or curl. Contrary to the fashion of his time, it drooped upon his shoulders, like a pall falling round the white face of a corpse.

On a low cushion beside sat his niece, at once a likeness and a contrast. Their resemblance was striking,—there was the identical outline,—though age had lost the glowing tints of youth. Both had the same mass of black hair, the high intellectual forehead, the strongly marked brow, the slightly aquiline nose; but, above all, there was the same expression, an inward [illegible] melancholy look, whenever their features were in repose. It was a similitude that every year would increase, for it was the similitude [illegible]r.

Henrietta's was a style [illegible] uncommon in England, a bright and sunny brunette, the soft brown of whose skin was warmed by the richest crimson that ever flushed a cheek with a whole summer of roses, while her lip was of scarlet—the dewy coral has its freshness, but conveys not its brightness. Her hair floated unbound in long s[illegible] tresses, and her tall figure was almost concealed by a white damask robe, fastened loosely at the waist, but leaving that graceful outline which reveals the most exquisite proportion!

No wonder that the old man's eye dwelt upon her with mingled pride and tenderness; yet was it a face that might cause affection many an anxious hour, for there was mind in the lofty and clear forehead, heart in the warm and flushed cheek,—and what are mind and heart to woman, but fairy gifts, for whose possession a grievous price will be exacted.

Suddenly her uncle rose from his seat, exclaiming, "We are over sad and silent. I will go seek the gift, reserved by me for our parting. No duchess in the court of St. James's shall rival the Lady Marchmont in diamonds, at least,—and you, Henrietta, will have to make no sacrifice for their enjoyment."

The youthful countess was gratified by display, for, to the imaginative, it bears a charm, of which a more staid temperament dreams not. Yet, at that moment, she felt as if the acquisition of these gems were a calamity. Their possession involved separation from her uncle, from every relic of home affections, and from all that yet lingered with her of her childhood.

CHAPTER II.

THE MORALITY OF DIAMONDS.

There was an evil in Pandora's box
Beyond all other ones, yet it came forth
In guise so lovely, that men crowded round
And sought it as the dearest of all treasure.
Then were they stung with madness and despair:
High minds were bowed in abject misery.
The hero trampled on his laurell'd crown,
While genius broke the lute it waked no more.
Young maidens, with pale cheeks, and faded eyes,
Wept till they died. Then there were broken hearts—
Insanity and Jealousy, that feeds
Unto satiety, yet loathes its food;
Suicide digging its own grave; and Hate,
Unquenchable and deadly; and Remorse—
The vulture feeding on its own life-blood.
The evil's name was Love—these curses seem
His followers for ever.

Sir Jasper re-entered, bearing a crimson velvet casket, and broidered with armorial bearings.

"It is getting dark and cold," said he; "let us draw to the fire."

Henrietta rang for the attendants to draw in the ponderous curtains; and in the meanwhile, curious to behold the stores of the emblazoned depository, lighted the tapers for herself. The case was speedily unclasped, and the countess stood dazzled with the brilliancy of the precious contents. She hastily took thence the bracelets, and fastened them upon an arm round and polished as of marble, then gathered up her night-black hair into the lustrous coronet, and ran to a mirror, which, though dim with time and use, grew radiant with these shining gems.

"My dear, good uncle," she cried, "you are too kind, too generous."

"Giving you your own, is no generosity," returned Sir Jasper: "these are the jewels of your house—the portion of its heiress."

"I am glad," said Henrietta, a flush of pride deepening the bloom upon her cheek, "that they have been ours; I am glad

to associate their brightness with the past. Fresh from the merchant, they convey no sentiment but that of wealth; while these hereditary diamonds recall whole generations of stately beauty. I rejoice that they have descended with our line."

"So do not I," said her uncle, in a low and altered tone. "I see in those glittering trinkets the departure of youth and of love, the wreck of the heart's best hopes and sweetest affections. To me they are mocking records of the past. As they fling back the taper's rays, they seem to boast,—'The heart was a game between us; you risked upon it passion, truth, belief, but we won the stake.'"

He sank back in his arm chair, and riveted his gaze upon one of the portraits which hung on the gloomy walls. Almost unwittingly, Henrietta pursued the motion of his eyes, which rested intensely upon a picture that displayed herself, as a child of three years, her father, and her mother.

In Sir Henry Meredith's appearance there was nothing that won upon the sight, though the limner had done his best for him. The countenance had no character. But his consort was indeed lovely, like, and yet not like, the daughter who now watched her. There was the same rich complexion, although the features were of less perfect contour, the forehead more narrow, and the face devoid of the meaning which mind, and mind only, can impart. But this the passing observer might scarcely have detected, for few would seek beyond that exceeding loveliness.

"She is very beautiful," sighed Sir Jasper; "to me was that face once the fairest of the Almighty's works. I loved, as they love who love but once. At parting from her, I have flung me on the ground along which her light feet had skimmed, to gather the common wild flowers that they could not crush. The casual mention of her name was to my ear heaven's sweetest melody: and, if only for her sake, I believed in truth, and constancy, and goodness! I have felt sick with happiness when she has entered the room suddenly, and have trembled like an infant, when I but fancied I read anger in her averted eyes.

"Lady Agnes was my cousin; and in birth, youth, and affection, we were a fitting match: but we were poor. The world was, however, before us, and of what was I not capable for her love! I was strengthened even to parting from her, and we parted!—parted, with the fixed stars above, whose light was less lovely than her tears. Of the two, she was apparent-

ly the more sorrowful; for I subdued my sadness, that it might not enhance her suffering. She called me back to her, to give me one of those long black locks which, if but blown against my cheek, as we rambled together, made my whole frame shiver with delicious transport! I have now a raven curl, severed from her graceful brow, but it is not the same.

"Well, I forthwith went abroad, and joined my brother, who had for some years past resided at Vienna. My heart was too full, too young for silence, and I told him all. He heard me calmly; and as calmly promised to further our attachment. The implicitness of my reliance stayed not to ask his sympathy. To talk of her was happiness, and my brother seemed a part of that home whither he was then returning.

"What desolation was in his departure! for the first time I had to struggle against the world alone. Fortunately, from the absence of some, and illness of others, who were attached with me to the embassy, there was much to distract me from my dejection, for my official duties had become of unusual severity. I was even happy then, for I was employed, and had motive for employment. I lived in the future,—that future which I fashioned to my will. I have since tried occupation as a resource, and how different was it when sweetened by the projects of hope! A year passed rapidly away, and I could look sanguinely forward to a successful career. Intrusted, at length, with a mission to England, whose completion would give me a few days at Meredith Place, I planned to come upon them by surprise.

"How well I remember the evening that saw my return on that old domain! The same soft twilight pervaded Nature as when I left it—not a shadow of change had passed over the old house and its grounds. The oaks, though scarcely yet in leaf, flung down their giant shadows, and the dew rested beneath their shelter. The hawthorn's breath came upon the gale as sweetly as of yore; and the wind, as it scattered the green blossoms which our young peasantry call "locks and keys," made the same rustling in the ashen boughs.

"I walked on alone, for my grooms had gone round with the horses. After a moment's pause to breathe—for the sense of present happiness was too much—I stood beside the little stream whereon her shadow was imprinted when we bade farewell; and fancied that, like my heart, it too should have retained that dark outline as faithfully as it mirrored the stars, which were flickering in the flood even as I saw them then.

"When nearer the house, however, there came upon me signs of change;—I heard the roll of carriages and the sound of music. Suddenly a stream of light burst from the windows. I must have arrived at the moment of some festive celebration;—fortunate, for Agnes would assuredly be there.

"To place this beyond doubt, ere I withdrew to change my dress, I entered the vestibule unperceived, and made my way to the musician's gallery, from which I could look down upon the scene below. All was gayety and animation; brilliant groups were flitting past in rapid succession; but my attention was at once attracted to the head of the room, where was stationed a lady in white satin, to whom my brother was presenting every guest successively.

"I could hear the musicians applaud among themselves the beauty of the bride, who at that moment turned her head towards the gallery; I felt upon whom I must look—it was the face of Agnes!

"Henrietta, I watched her more unmovedly than I now tell you of that watching! The beauteous head, from whose dark ringlets came the one yet next my heart, was bound with these very diamonds; and the eyes that I had last seen so sad and tearful, were now full of light.

"The sound of her silvery laughter came where I stood, as, resting on my brother's arm, she paced along the room. At once I darted from the gallery and forsook my father's house, and neither saw it nor England for many long years. It matters not how those years went by; suffice it, that my heart at length yearned within me to behold my native land again. Experience had taught me, that woman's falsehood was no unparalleled marvel; but it had coupled with this conviction, that nothing in after life can atone for the bitterness of our first rude awakening.

"I returned, hardly knowing wherefore, to Meredith Place—as if the scenes of youth could recall our youth again! they only make us feel the more acutely how far it is removed.

"On my arrival I met, winding darkly along the great avenue, my brother's funeral train. I saw the soft blossoms of the hawthorn mingle with the black plumes of the hearse.

"Confusion was upon all things. Creditors were clamouring aloud in the house of the widow and the fatherless; and in the very hall through which a coffin had late passed, were heard the jingling of glasses and the rattle of the dice-box.

"To my inquiries concerning Lady Meredith, the domestics

abruptly replied, that 'she was very ill, in her own chamber.' 'Ay, take my word, she will never leave it without being carried,' muttered an old woman, unfeelingly, as she hobbled slowly onward, with strength and temper alike exhausted by attendance on the invalid.

"I bade this person go, and demand if Lady Meredith could receive her brother-in-law; for, painful as our interview might be, it was indispensable. Meantime I stood apart in a recess, loathing the scene on which I was compelled to look: it was another leaf in the dark history of man's selfishness and ingratitude.

"Sir Henry had consumed his substance in ostentation and riotous hospitality—had fed many at his board, made many merry in his halls, but not a friend was in his house of mourning; the very retainers who had grown rich upon his ruin, seemed to deem the burial of their master but a signal for carousing and license. The old woman soon returned, bringing word that 'her ladyship would be glad to see me.' What mockery in such a message! Though my way was through many well-known chambers, I recognised not one. My sight was deadened to external things: I was absorbed by a troubled and vague picture—the coming interview.

"'This is my lady's room,' said my decrepit guide. Even in that hour, what first occurred to me was surprise that the lady of our noble mansion should have chosen for her abode one of its smallest and worst apartments. All bore an air of discomfort. Though the evenings were still chilly, no fire was upon the hearth, which was strewed only with yesterday's gray and mouldering ashes: night was fast closing in, and the curtains were as yet undrawn, while the half daylight made the single still glimmering candle yet more faint.

"I approached the bed, and all else was forgotten. There was stretched, pale, worn, and changed, beyond what I had even dreamed of change, she whose image was still treasured in my heart so fair and so bright. Years, long years of care, had borne heavily on those sunken temples, and on those pallid features.

"She perceived me instantly, and feebly extended her hand, but her words died in the utterance, I kissed her cold and wasted fingers, and bent in silence over her.

"A little creature was already kneeling there, but I yet saw nothing beyond the strange and hollow eyes which gazed upon me, as if in entreaty. Though altered and dim, I could still

read their wishes. She then pointed to a restorative medicine which stood near; and, young as you were, Henrietta, you marked the sign, and, pouring a few drops into a cup, brought it towards the couch. Not tall enough to reach her mouth, you gave the cup gently into my hands—and your parent's weary head was upheld by my arm to take it from me, but she had no longer the power to swallow. By the help of a chair, you had now clambered up among the pillows, and were trying if she would drink it at your offer. Something in the face suddenly struck you as unaccustomed, for you were terrified, and looked imploringly towards me for aid.

"I turned to the aged nurse, but she was lying back in a deep-cushioned easy chair, overpowered with weariness and heavy sleep.

"Again Lady Meredith raised her head from the pillow, and a sudden and unnatural light flashed from her drooping eye-lids.

"'I know you, Jasper,' said she, in a faint and sepulchral voice. 'It had been hard for me to die without your forgiveness. You are looking kindly and sadly on me: look ever thus, I pray you, on my poor and orphan child, who can claim no friend upon the earth, except yourself.' I raised you, pale, pretty creature that you were, from the bed, and you clung about my neck. 'Yes, she will love you!' murmured the sufferer, yet more feebly; and, at the next effort to ejaculate, her accents died away with a frightful gurgling in the throat.

"She stretched her hands convulsively—a rapid change passed over her features—I looked upon the face of the dead!"

The silence which ensued at the close of this narrative, was broken by Sir Jasper's remark: "Well, my poor Henrietta, the mother more than atoned for all, when she bequeathed to me the daughter. But human nature is, at the best, but selfish: I looked forward to your alliance with Lord Marchmont as the realization of my dearest wishes. You are married; and I shrink from your alienation from me. I dread to commit my treasure to a callous, cruel world. But, good night, love, for we must arise with the dawn, and I am weary—most weary; to-morrow, I shall be in better spirits."

He kissed her, and they parted for the night.

CHAPTER III.

ANTICIPATION.

We do not know how much we love,
  Until we come to leave;
An aged tree, a common flower,
  Are things o'er which we grieve.
There is a pleasure in the pain
That brings us back the past again.

We linger while we turn away,
  We cling while we depart;
And memories, unmarked till then,
  Come crowding on the heart.
Let what will lure our onward way,
Farewell's a bitter word to say.

The moon was shining full into Lady Marchmont's window, and a soft western breeze was stirring the branches at the yet open casement. The aspect on this side the dwelling was as wooded and fertile, as on the other it was bare and barren. To the left, towered an ancient avenue of oaks; to the right, a pleasure-ground was carried aslope towards the park.

"Still and so beautiful was that fair night,
It might have calmed the gay amid their mirth,
And given the wretched a delight in tears."

But Lady Marchmont's feelings were not in unison with the scene; she was excited and restless, needed to talk, and not to think—in a word, to be taken out of herself.

The objects around were wearisomely familiar; they recalled too much for one, who wished rather to hope than to repine! Henrietta's temper was too sudden and quick for melancholy; she was impatient of her own regret, and strove to dissipate rather than indulge the mood.

At that moment it struck eight o'clock. The church-spire, touched by the moonbeams, shone above the aged yews that stood in a heavy group below. The chime struck Lady Marchmont's musing into another vein.

"How early," thought she, "and Algernon will not be at home for many hours. I might go and visit Ethel: to-morrow. I shall have little leisure." She threw a mantle hastily around

her, and, drawing its hood above her head, descended to the garden. As she ever and anon passed by some shrub herself had planted, or neared some covert bower, where she had whiled away the listless hours, she would half pause, and again would urge her pace hurriedly onward.

She had now reached the churchyard, which few of her age and time would have traversed with her indifference. She ran across it, as the shortest route to Mrs. Churchill's grounds; and Mrs. Churchill was the grandmother with whom Ethel dwelt.

A little wicket opened into a half-wilderness, half-shrubbery, whose narrow pathway was chequered by the soft light that found its way through the densely-grown plantation. As she turned to secure the latchet, the voice of music came upon her ear. "Ah!" said she, and a conscious blush lit up her cheek; "Walter Maynard is then with them." The sound of her own half whisper seemed to startle herself, and she passed on with a haughty smile, but hesitating step. "And Norbourne Courtenaye, doubtless;" but this name was spoken without embarrassment, and aloud.

Another instant, and the music ended; the leafy screen was divided, and she was the centre of the little company, every one of whom rejoiced to welcome her. She seated herself by Ethel; and declaring that her walk had left her no breath as yet to talk, urged them to resume the harmony that she had interrupted. All were too young, and too intimate, for the embarrassment of ceremony, and again music broke on the stillness of the night.

It was an old English air, to which the vocalists had set the words of a sonnet, written by Walter Maynard. The words of the song were sad: but what is the young poet's melancholy but prophecy?

> Dream no more of that sweet time
> When the heart and cheek were young;
> Dream no more of that sweet time
> Ere the veil from life was flung.
> Yet the cheek retains the rose
> Which its beauty had of yore,
> But the bloom upon the heart
> Is no more.
>
> We have mingled with the false,
> Till belief has lost the charm
> Which it had when hope was new!

And the pulse of feeling warm.
We have had the bosom wrung
By the mask which friendship wore;
Affection's trusting happiness
Is no more.

We have seen the young and gay
Dying as the aged die;
Miss we not the laughing voice,
Miss we not the laughing eye?
Wishes take the place of hope,
We have dreamed till faith is o'er;
Its freshness made life fair, and that
Is no more.

Take away yon sparkling bowl—
What is left to greet it now?
Loathing lip that turns away;
Downcast eye and weary brow.
Hopes and joys that wont to smile,
Mirth that lit its purple store;
Friends that wont to join the pledge,
Are no more.

The scene was rather grouped by some Italian painter, whose fancy had grown luxuriant amid the golden summers of his clime, than one actually passing under England's colder sky, and on England's colder soil. In front there was a sloping lawn, shaded from all but the south wind, a favoured nook of verdure, begirt with trees and flower-beds.

On one side, fancifully decorated with shells and spars, mosses and creeping plants, was discovered a building, between hermitage and summer pavilion; on the other waved a copse of larches, exhaling that spicy and peculiar fragrance which the autumnal wind brings from out the fir. Two little passages, cut into stairs of turf, wound uniformly to the level sward which made the fore-ground of the landscape. At the end of this was a sun-dial, whereon the moon fell with sufficient brightness to reveal the hour: beside was a fountain whose waters trickled with a low perpetual song, from the rough lips of its carved basin, into a large reservoir, moulded from fragments of stone, sea-shells, and gnarled roots of trees bound with a growth of weeds and wild creepers. Southward, the lawn lay open to a pleasure-garden, but the flowers were now but few, and those of the faintest hue and perfume. The gorgeous reds and yellows which herald decay were beginning to touch the forest foliage; and the limes, in which autumn's fi t

symptoms are so lovely, looked in the pale light as if covered with primrose blossoms.

Throughout the garden there was, indeed, much arrangement, and much art; from the water-jet, trained to fling its silvery cascade, to the yew-trees shaped into peacocks; still it was arrangement prompted by taste, and art that loved the nature which it guided. And if the horticultural skill, on which Mrs. Churchill piqued herself, might have escaped the stranger's observation, the little knot now gathered before her terrace would inevitably have caught his attention.

The party was of five: Ethel and her half-companion, half-attendant, Lavinia Fenton, our countess, and two young gallants. Three of these were singing; but the attitude and bearing of the entire group, careless as it was, told of their individual peculiarities more effectively, perhaps, than would have been betrayed in more constrained hours.

Norbourne Courtenaye was a stripling of some three or four and twenty, whose fair complexion made him look even younger. He had that air which so marks our aristocracy—that air which, if not embodied in the word 'high bred,' is beyond the reach of words. He had those fine and prominently cut features which grow handsomer with years; but, at the present time, they conveyed only one expression. The heart was in the eyes; and these, fixed on Ethel Churchill, were blind to all but the beloved face which alone they cared to see. To Norbourne the whole world had one division, the place where she was, from that where she was not.

Ethel returned not his gaze; but she was not on that account insensible of it. Natural as it may seem to look straight forward, her eyes tried every direction save that in which they might fall on those of Courtenaye. Her part in the trio was nearly nominal, and yet no bird singing in the sunshine, seemed ever to sing more from the fulness of a joyous heart. Her voice, when you caught it, was, indeed, "the very echo of happy thoughts;" and smile after smile parted her small and childish mouth. Her beauty was of that kind which is our ideal of a cherub's—rounded, innocent, and happy. The long golden hair—for she was too young yet to have it dressed after the prevailing mode—absolutely sparkled in the light; while her skin realized the old poet's exquisite delineation:

"Fair as the trembling snow whose fleeces clothe
Our Alpine hills; sweet as the rose's spirit

> Or violet's cheek on which the morning leaves
> A tear at parting."

The least cause sent the blush to the cheek, and the laughter to the lip; for Ethel was guileless as she was gay.

The darling, like Henrietta, of an aged relative, their training had been widely different. Half Ethel's life had been spent in the flower-garden; and it was as if the sweetness and joyousness of the summer's sunny children had infused themselves into the being of their youthful companion. The open air had given strength to an originally delicate frame, and cheerfulness to her mind. She had read little beyond her grand-mother's cherished volumes, of which a herbal was the study, and the Cassandra of Madame Scudori the recreation. Out of these stately impossibilities, she had constructed an existence of her own, full of love, courage, and fidelity; all highly picturesque and highly false. No matter—the truth comes only too soon.

And so, when Norbourne Courtenaye, a distant connexion of the family, arrived in a course of careless wandering at their house, it seemed the most natural and fitting thing that he should fall in love with Ethel. It seemed, too, not less natural nor less fitting, that she should fall in love with Norbourne; though not a little disheartened, at starting, by the absolute want of difficulties and adventures, with which she afterwards discovered that it was actually possible to dispense.

Mrs. Churchill saw nothing of what was going on—she had her own views for Ethel, whom she considered too much a child to have any of her own; and she was only pleased to have her house so cheerful. Family and fortune were on both sides equal; and they might enjoy, so it seemed, as long as they could contrive it, a courtship's charming uncertainty, without a solitary obstacle to render it uncertain.

Lavinia, her companion, was likewise handsome; or, perhaps, rather what is called a fine looking girl; and had in her figure and demeanour, as well as in the arrangement of her simple toilet, that which bespoke the coquette of nature's own making; and nature does as much in that way as society. Neglectful of her fine voice, she was obviously attending more to her companions than to her own singing; and it was manifest that she was not unwilling to attract Walter Maynard's heed, for she would omit from time to time her own, and listen to his part; and, when she suffered her rich notes to swell to their

extent, it was in Maynard's eyes that she sought to read approval!

But, what attention he allowed to escape from the music, was given all to Ethel Churchill. If his eye but turned towards her, the heart's utter prostration was in the gaze!

And she—the young and brilliant countess, who sat at queen-like distance from the throng—must watch those glances with a galling pang of envy; not the less bitter, too, because unacknowledged even to herself!

Walter Maynard was standing with his arms folded, and his slight figure leaning against the trunk of an old ash. He was neither so handsome, nor had so fine a figure, as Norbourne Courtenaye; and lost something of his height by a stoop, the result either of a naturally delicate chest, or of sedentary pursuits: but none, knowing how to read the human face, could have passed by his without having their attention riveted. It had a touch of Henrietta's own rich and changeful hues, but it was more feverish. The eyes were large and black, and had the moonlight's melancholy, with that tearful lustre which is the certain sign of keen susceptibility. After-years will drive the tears, which gathered trembling on the eye-lash, back upon the heart; but the tears will be more bitter, because unshed!

The mouth was almost feminine in its sweetness, and yet the smile was sad. Tender it was, but not cheerful, and lacked the energy that sat enthroned upon the magnificent brow. Young as he was, his hair was thin upon his temples, where the large veins shone transparent and blue; and the whole countenance was one which would have won attention in a crowd—which could not be identified with a common person. He was of those whose sensitive organization, and inborn talent, constitute that genius which holds ordinary maxims at defiance. No education can confer—no circumstances check it; and even to account for it, we need, with the ancients, to believe in inspiration.

Sir Jasper Meredith had noted the extraordinary abilities shown by Walter, even in his childhood; and, having confirmed the correctness of that first impression, had sent him to the University. There, however, he had disappointed expectation. In sooth, his genius was of too creative an order for the apprenticeship of learning; he needed life in its hopes, its fears, its endurance; all that the poet learns to reproduce. Education is for the many, and Walter Maynard was of the few. He had been much in Meredith Place, and Henrietta had been used

to listen by the hour to his eloquent enthusiasm, so alive with poetry and with passion. Proud and ambitious, she yet loved him—the poor and the dependent; for there was in his highly-toned imagination that which responded to her own. She was too clever herself not to appreciate a kindred cleverness; and the seclusion of her life lent a reality to his dreams of the future—to his aspirings after that fame, which every volume in the crowded collection proclaimed to be so glorious. They read together; and she felt that his was, indeed, the master mind. Her vanity was gratified by his intellect. It was a worthy homage.

These softer feelings were awakened by that interest which belongs to the melancholy and romance inseparable from the poetic temperament.

In the outset of their intimacy, admiration seemed a mere question of taste; and jealousy first taught her that she loved. She saw that he loved Ethel Churchill, utterly, worshippingly: that the withered flower which Ethel flung from her was to him a treasure. She then remembered that her own early bearing towards him had been haughty, and indifferent; that she had sneered at the young collegian's shyness; and now thought with "the late remorse of love," how unlike to this had been Ethel's gentle kindness. But all these things belonged to by-gone days. She wrapped herself up in a brilliant future. Still there were moments when she felt that its hopes were icicles.

CHAPTER IV.

> Oh! never another dream can be
> Like that early dream of ours,
> When the fairy, Hope, lay down like a child,
> And slept amid opening flowers.
>
> Little we recked of our coming years,
> We fancied them just what we chose;
> For, whatever life's after lights may be,
> It colours its first from the rose.

"So you are going to leave us?" said Ethel.

"Why, child," (they were of the same age, but Henrietta's mind had far outgone its years,) "you say this in the most dolorous of tones. I really see nothing so very dreadful in

going to London, where I have made up my mind to force the women to die of envy, and the men of love,—the one by my diamonds, the other by my eyes."

"None may doubt the power of the latter, at least," observed Courtenaye.

"Truce to your fine sayings," replied Henrietta; "I would not give thank-you for a compliment from a person in your position. Now, don't blush, Ethel; I am only laying down general rules. A man in love is a nonentity for the time—he is nothing; and nature, that is, my nature, abhors a vacuum. Now, is not that a philosophical deduction, Mr. Maynard?"

Walter started from his revery—he had not been listening.

"You never know what one is saying," exclaimed Lady Marchmont, pettishly.

"Nay," said he, in one of those deep melodious voices which almost startle with their peculiar sweetness, "I heard you speak, and, as one often does with songs, in the music I lost the words."

"How I should like," said Ethel, "to see you dressed on the day of your presentation. When I imagine things about you, I always fancy you '*reine d'amour*' at a tournament, while

> '——— your eyes
> Rain influence, and adjudge the prize.' "

"Thank Heaven," cried Henrietta, laughing, "you do not, even in fancy, turn me into a shepherdess, with sheep on one side, and a purling brook on the other."

"And yet," said Ethel, "there is something that takes my fancy mightily in these sweet and tranquil pictures. I have always felt sorrow when my shepherdess has been taken from her green meadows, even to a palace."

"Well, my vocation is not for innocent pleasures," returned Lady Marchmont: "I own I prefer my own kind to lambs and wild flowers."

"How entirely I agree with you," cried Walter Maynard; "as yet I know little of life, excepting from the written page: but existence appears to me scarcely existence, without its struggles and its success. I should like to have some great end before me; the striving to attain, amid a crowd of competitors, would make me feel all the energies of life."

"And yet," interrupted Courtenaye, "what hours of seemingly delicious revery I have seen you pass, flung on the bank

of some lonely river, where the hours were mirrored in sunshine."

"I was thinking of the future," answered Walter, "and a very pleasant thing to think about."

"If we had but one of those charming old fairies for godmothers," said Norbourne, "of whom my nurse was so fond of telling, in the vain hope of putting me to sleep; as if I did not keep myself awake as long as I could, to hear;—if such a one were to appear, I wonder what gift we should each choose?"

"I should so like to know," replied Lady Marchmont; "now let us be honest, and frankly confess the inmost desire of our hearts. I will set the example; for, as I am going to court, I may not need to speak truth for some time, and may therefore use up what I have now. I frankly confess that my wish would be for universal admiration."

Walter Maynard paused for a moment, looking at Ethel; it was but a glance, and a deeper melancholy came over his face,

"I would wish," said he, "for fame—glorious and enduring fame."

"And I," cried Alice, eagerly, "would wish to be a lady—have an embroidered damask gown, and ride in a coach-and-six."

"I would wish," whispered Ethel, "to be loved."

"And," added Norbourne, in a whisper almost as low, "I would wish to love."

"I think," exclaimed Lady Marchmont, "that Alice's wish is the most rational of all.—Well, girl, success to your coach-and-six."

"And I wish," said a venerable old lady, who, unperceived, had joined the young circle, "that you would all come into the house—for the evening is growing damp, and supper is ready."

"My dear Mrs. Churchill," said Lady Marchmont, taking her hand, and respectfully kissing it, "you must not fancy that this is a farewell visit. I came hither to-night, for I did not know what to do with myself. The way of the world—I have had all I wanted, and must go."

"Just come in," said Mrs. Churchill, "and take one glass of my mead."

"No—not even such a golden promise tempts me. I am afraid that Lord Marchmont will be at home before me—and he is not yet accustomed to be kept waiting."

"I would not on any account detain you—but come and see us to-morrow," said the old lady, kindly.

Waving her hand, Henrietta ran rapidly down the path by which she came, and was soon out of sight.

"She is a sweet creature, and lovely," said Mrs. Churchill; "I wish she may bring back the same light step and heart with which she leaves us."

Mrs. Churchill was not the first person who has been deceived by appearances. The light step there assuredly was—but the light heart, Henrietta herself would have said was a heavy one. With spirits exhausted by the forced exertion of the last hour, she came back to her room even more gloomy than when she left it.

"I have seen him for the last time;" and perhaps that moment was the only one during their whole acquaintance, that she had thought of Walter Maynard with unmixed tenderness. Pride, mortification, and disdain of his actual position, had usually mingled with all gentler thoughts. But there is something in parting that softens the heart;—it is as if we had never felt how unutterably dear a beloved object could be, till we are about to lose it for ever.

Unconsciously to herself, she had grown accustomed to see Walter Maynard, to note the changes in his expressive face, to listen to his picturesque and impassioned discourse. It now struck her suddenly how much she should miss them. The knowledge of her own heart, and of his, had come together. Hope had never been the companion of love. Even in her most secret communings with herself, she had never admitted even the fancy of their union. But to-night she felt deeply within her secret soul the utter happiness of loving and being beloved. What were her future brilliant prospects? The truth within her whispered, that she had been happier, even in the lonely lot which she that very evening had ridiculed, with Walter Maynard, than in a palace, and not his. For the first time, she regretted her marriage. Lord Marchmont had been the cause of her drawing comparisons. Her superior mind at once detected the narrowness of his: and her warm heart shrank from his cold one. She saw that he did not love her—that he never even thought whether she loved him.

"'Tis a strange thing," she murmured, "how love, which should be such a blesssing, should yet cause so much misery and disunion. Ah! Ethel does not know her own happiness. I only wonder Mr. Courtenaye did not fall in love with me. It would have completed our game of cross-purposes,"—and

she laughed aloud. The sound of her own laughter jarred upon her ear.

"What do I laugh at?" thought she; "at wasted affection at the consciousness that, young as I am, my heart is withered—that I look to amusement as to a resource, and to vanity as the business of an existence. Ah! love is more powerful than I deemed; for at this very moment of whom am I thinking?—my kind uncle?—no; of a stranger. It is the last time I will yield to such a weakness;" and, rising from her seat, she began to pace the room. With a struggle to escape from her own thoughts, she rang for her attendants, and, complaining of fatigue, went hastily to bed. But a crowd of heavy thoughts came to her pillow; and if, when Lord Marchmont returned, he had gazed on the beautiful face then hushed in sleep, he would have seen that the cheek was flushed, and that tears yet glistened on the long dark eyelashes.

CHAPTER V.

A POET'S MIDNIGHT.

Is not the lark companion of the spring?
And should not Hope—that sky-lark of the heart—
Bear, with her sunny song, youth company?
Still is its sweetest music poured for love;
And that is not for me: yet will I love,
And hope, though only for her praise and tears;
And they will make the laurel's cold bright leaves
Sweet as the tender myrtle.

HENRIETTA'S was not the only step that crossed the churchyard on that night—it was, also, Walter Maynard's nearest way home. But he paused, and stood gazing around. It was a night solemn and lovely as ever seemed fitting atmosphere for the city of the dead. There was not a cloud upon the face of the sky; the vapours and the cares of day had dispersed in the pure clear atmosphere. The dews were rising, and the long grass seemed like a sheet of bright and waveless water in the moonlight. The panes of the Gothic window in the church glittered like a succession of small shining mirrors; and the vane on the spire was like a light placed there.

The scattered tombstones lay white around; and [illegible]emselves that side the building told of the depth of shadow[illegible]fty will; behind. The birds had long since been asleep; [illegible] a breath of wind stirred the drooping leaves. There was an uncertain beauty in the distance, which gave an additional charm to the scene; the light, silvery and tremulous, was more indistinct than that of day. Familiar objects took new shapes, and every outline was softened down with a varying and undulating grace.

But Walter Maynard's eyes were fixed upon one spot. A light was in the window of a turret just caught among the old oaks that surrounded Mrs. Churchill's house. Once or twice a shadow flitted past, and the light was obscured. In the silence you might have heard the youthful watcher's heart beating. It was Ethel Churchill's window. At length the light was extinguished, and Walter turned slowly away.

"It is all dark now," said he, "and the better suited to me. Why should I even wish for her love? What have I to offer? only my hopes; and what are they?" As he spake, his eyes rested on the graves below. "Yes," muttered the youth, "they are sufficient answer; they are indeed the end of all human hope."

Mechanically he turned from one to another. Some were recently banded down with osiers, and the grass was varied with primrose roots; on some the foxglove grew luxuriantly, while others had a tombstone, carved with a name and a brief epitaph.

"Ay," said Walter, "this rude verse long outlasts those for whom it is written. The writer, the reader, the sorrow which it embalmed, have long past away,—not so the verse itself. Poetry is the immortality of earth: where shall we look for our noblest thoughts, and our tenderest feelings, but in its eternal pages? The spirit within me asserts its divine right. I know how different I am from those who surround me. Can the gifts of which I am conscious be given to me in vain? It were a mockery of the mind's supremacy, did I not believe in my own future."

He turned again in the direction of the turret-window, and the large round moon shone above the old trees. It seemed as if she looked down tenderly and lovingly on that dearest spot.

"Ah, sweetest and loveliest!" exclaimed the watcher, "would to Heaven those days were not past when the troubabour took his sword and lute, and taught far courts the light of

eyes, and the music of her name! But the sympathy . appealed yet remains. There are still human hearts to . red by the haunted line, and the gifted word. My page may be read by those who will feel its deep and true meaning, because, like myself, they have loved and suffered. Farewell, sweetest Ethel! we, perhaps, shall meet no more, but you will hear of me; and the remembered beauty of that face will be my angel of inspiration—the one sweet muse lighting up my lonely heart."

Hastily he left the churchyard, his pace rapid as his thoughts, which framed, as he went along, his future plans; and to visit London as soon as possible was his last resolve. He soon reached the dilapidated house which called him master; but the ivy, silvered by the moonlight, hid the desolation which was so apparent by day.

His family had left his father a ruined fortune, which a life of adventures did not tend to improve. Mr. Maynard returned home with an orphan boy; and a wound in his side, received while defending his superior officer, led to his premature death. With many to advise, but none to govern, the orphan boy led a desultory life, often wasting his time, but still collecting material for the future productions of a creative and poetical mind.

In one of the most original and thoughtful works of our day, it is said,—

"It is a fatal gift; for, when possessed in its highest quality and strength, what has it ever done for its votaries? What were all those great poets of whom we talk so much? what were they in their lifetime? The most miserable of their species: depressed, doubtful, obscure; or involved in petty quarrels, and petty persecutions; often unappreciated, utterly uninfluential beggars, flatterers of men, unworthy of their recognition. What a train of disgustful incidents, what a record of degrading circumstances, is the life of a great poet!"*

This is too true a picture; still, what does it prove, but that this earth is no home for the more spiritual part of our nature—that those destined to awaken our highest aspirations, and our tenderest sympathies, are victims rather than votaries of the divine light within them? They gather from sorrow its sweetest emotions; they repeat of hope but its noblest visions; they look on nature with an earnest love, which wins the power of making her hidden beauty visible: and they reproduce the

* Contarini Fleming.

passionate, the true, and the beautiful. Alas! they themselves are not what they paint; the low want subdues the lofty will; the small and present vanity interferes with the far and glorious aim: but still it is something to have looked beyond the common sphere where they were fated to struggle. They paid in themselves the bitter penalty of not realizing their own ideal; but mankind have to be thankful for the generous legacy of thought and harmony bequeathed by those who were among earth's proscribed and miserable. Fame is bought by happiness.

CHAPTER VI.

MUCH CHANGE IN A LITTLE TIME.

> And she too—that beloved child, was gone—
> Life's last and loveliest link. There was her place
> Vacant beside the hearth—he almost dreamed
> He saw her still; so present was her thought.
> Then some slight thing reminded him how far
> The distance was that parted her and him.
> Fear dwells around the absent—and our love
> For such grows all too anxious, too much filled
> With vain regrets, and fond inquietudes:
> We know not Love till those we love depart.

NOT above a month had elapsed since the little party were seated on the sloping lawn; and yet that short space had sufficed to change the position of all assembled in the pleasant quiet of that evening.

In the gloomy library of Meredith Place is seated an old man, surrounded by books which he is too weary to read, and by chemical apparatus which he has not spirits to use. Till she went, Sir Jasper knew not how dearly the child of his old age had clung to his very existence. He fancied that he had resources in his own mind: alas! the mind ill supplies the wants of the heart. There is to age something so enlivening in the company of youth, unconsciously it shares the cheerfulness it witnesses, and hopes with the hopes around, in that sympathy which is the kindliest part of our nature. Even his young neighbour, who so often shared his studies, had departed—Walter Maynard had gone to London. Nor was the house of the Churchills less altered. Their young kinsman had received a

sudden summons from his mother, on the occasion of his uncle, Lord Norbourne's visit. Ethel sat lonely on the little lawn, where every thing had altered almost as much as her own feelings. The approach of autumn's bleaker hour had stripped many of the trees of their foliage, and the bare boughs waved disconsolate to a low and moaning wind. The last of the flowers had fallen from the stem; and there was not even moonlight to soften the dreariness of the scene. The dark evenings closed in rapidly, and even the cheerful fireside failed to bring back the smile to Ethel's lip, or the gladness to her eye. There was, however, one time to which she and Sir Jasper alike looked forward. The post came in twice a-week; and the sound of the horn, though its arrival was always expected, and every minute of the hour before it came counted, while the breath was held for fear of losing a sound, yet not the less did Ethel's colour deepen to crimson, and her heart beat even to pain. Night after night, too, did she sink back with the sickness of disappointed hope. No letter came from Norbourne Courtenaye.

Sir Jasper was more fortunate: he also set two days apart in the week, he also counted minutes of the evenings when the post came in; but he was never disappointed—it always brought him a letter. Whatever might be the young countess's engagements, none prevented her from writing to her uncle; and for the sake of the beloved writer the aged recluse took an interest in all the news of the day—in such light chro nicles as the following epistle.

FIRST LETTER OF LADY MARCHMONT TO SIR JASPER MEREDITH.

Vanity! guiding power, 'tis thine to rule
Statesman and vestryman—the knave or fool.
The Macedonian crossed Hydaspes' wave,
Fierce as the storm, and gloomy as the grave,
Urged by the thought, what would Athenians say,
When next they gathered on a market-day?
And the same spirit that induced his toil,
Leads on the cook, to stew, and roast, and boil:
Whether the spice be mixed—the flag unfurled—
Each deems their task the glory of the world.

After all, my dearest uncle, nothing has impressed me

more strongly than our first approach to London. It was getting dusk, and I had for some time been leaning back fatigued in the carriage, when, raising my head, I saw afar off a line of tremulous light on the horizon: it was the reflection of the myriad lamps and fires of the vast city we were about to enter. Next came a hollow murmur, something like the sound of the sea on our coast; but it soon grew less instinct with the mysterious harmony of the mighty, but most musical, world of waters—it was broken and harsh, and the noise of wheels was easily distinguished. Then we became involved, as it were, in a wilderness of houses; and there was something singularly oppressive in the feeling of immensity and of loneliness that came over me. The heavy vapours which hung dark and dense upon the air, were as if they rose charged with the crime and suffering of the multitudes below; and the faint light was like their feeble endeavours to struggle through the weary weight flung upon existence. How little and how worthless appeared all my own gay schemes and glad anticipations! I shrank from them as if they were a criminal selfishness. But, as you have sometimes said, I have not suffered enough for my fits of despondency to last very long: mine passed away on arriving at my new house—I cannot say home; that word is reserved for my childhood and you—dear old Meredith Place is still home to me. I was full of eagerness and curiosity, and would fain have snatched a candle from one of the servants, and ran over every room at once. But this was quite contrary to Lord Marchmont's ideas of the fitness of things; and he is, as you know, a disciplinarian in small matters. He has a genius for furniture, and piques himself on screens and arm-chairs.

We arrived three hours later than he intended, and, as the house could not be seen in the precise manner that he wished, he decided that it should not be seen at all till the next day. My own apartment, however, I was allowed to enter; and very pretty, I must say, it is. It is hung with Indian-silk, where the brightest of birds, and the gayest of flowers, disport themselves on a white ground. The screens and dressing-table are of black japan, while the mirror is set in exquisite silver filigree work, of which material are also the boxes of my toilet. There are also two large Venetian glasses. Lord Marchmont's picture used to hang in the place of one: he has removed it to the library,—"Taking for granted," said he, "that you would prefer your own face to mine.

Besides, it is too much of a good thing to have both substance and shadow." The conjugal gallantry was delicate—and true.

I was delighted the next morning when I approached the window: it looks on a small but pleasant garden, opening into the green Park. The fine old trees looked like familiar friends. In the distance were the towers of the Abbey, bathed with the golden tinge of early morning. I looked towards it, and thought of the happy evenings passed over the clasped volumes in which its annals are recorded. How glad I now am of all that we used to read together! I have now a thousand associations with you and the past, where otherwise there would be none.

My time is divided between visitors and dress-makers. Madame Legarde, "the glass of fashion, and the nurse of form," (*alias*, the most fashionable of milliners), has comfortably assured me, "that my figure has great merit, and only requires cultivation:" this is to be done by tissues, brocades, and laces, which are now scattered round me in charming confusion.

What a duty to one's self it is to be young, vain, and pretty! but the middle quality is the most important. Vanity is a cloak that wraps us up comfortably, and a drapery which sets us off to the best advantage; and its great merit is, that it suits itself to every sort of circumstance.

I have just had an amusing incident happen, very illustrative of my theory. Lord Marchmont gives dinners with a due sense of their importance, and our *chef de cuisine* is a master of the divine art. His late master fought a duel with his most intimate friend, because he found that he had been holding forth strong inducements for Chloe to become his. "My mistress," said the indignant Amphitryon, "was at his service; but to think of his endeavouring to seduce my cook!" Chloe had, however, a high sense of honour: "A false friend does not deserve me," was his only reply. The death, however, of Lord C—— set him free to an admiring world, and Marchmont was the successful candidate for his favours. Hitherto their harmony has been perfect—each appreciated the other; and it had been settled between them, that the first dinner after our marriage was to be a triumph.

This morning Chloe sent to ask an audience; it was granted, and he entered my dressing-room.

> "Just such a man, so wan, so spiritless,
> Drew Priam's curtains in the dead of night,
> And came to tell him that his Troy was burned."

Chloe is a tall meager-looking individual, just embodying the popular idea of a Frenchman. "*Mon Dieu!* madame!" exclaimed he, all but throwing himself at my feet in the most theatrical of attitudes (Titus, for example, in a scene of despair with Berenice), "mine honour is in your hands—I appeal to your feelings—you see before you de most miserable of humanity—*ma gloire* is the sacrifice of his lordship's prejudice! He will not hear reason but he will hear you."

"Thank you," said I, laughing.

"Ah, madame!" he exclaimed, "I do only mean, that you leave no reason for people to judge with; therefore they must let you judge for them—will you pity me?"

Well, to make short of a long story, told with a broken accent that made it doubly *piquant*, and embellished with gestures equally earnest and grotesque,—I found that the ornaments now used at desserts are on a gigantic scale; and Chloe believed that he had immortalized himself by a representation of the war of the Titans against the gods. Unfortunately, they were higher than even the room; and Lord Marchmont refused to comply with the wishes of the *artiste*, and to take down his splendidly painted ceiling to admit of the dessert. This threw Chloe into an agony: with tears in his eyes, he implored my intercession. "*C'est mon avenir* dat I ask of you. I have not slept for nights, filled with my grand project—*mais c'est magnifique!* Will madame fancy the entrance of de giants—taller than de tallest figures at de duke of—vat is dat berry?—ah! de queen's, Queensberry, or gooseberry."

My dear uncle, I behaved like an angel: I did not laugh—I admired the design—I sympathized with the professor's honorable ambition, but suggested a remedy. "A man of your genius," I said, "should despise the beaten track: all you can do with your giants is to have them a little larger than others have had. Invent something fresh—a hint is all that is needed by a man like yourself. Why not introduce pigmies? let us have some mythological device, executed in an exquisite style."

"*Madame est un ange de bonté! je comprends—mais c'est ravissant!* My rivals shall die! Yes, we will have the marriage of Peleus and Thetis in the temple of Solomon. *Je vois tout ce qu'il y a de grand dans votre idée* De temple shall be

of fine spun sugar, and Hymen shall hold a little torch of scented flame: then de apple flung by de goddess Discord shall be gold."

"Rather ominous," I exclaimed, "for a bridal feast."

"Ah, no! von fine moral lesson; and it shall be gilded. *Quel plaisir de faire une chose si nouvelle et si sublime!* Madame need not fear that she has intrusted her scheme to an unworthy hand—*je me dévoue à l'exécution. Mille graces*—madame has saved my life *et ma gloire.* If she wants the least small *bouillon*, I will always see to it myself."

So saying, he bowed out of the room with an air divided between conscious merit and tender gratitude.

Any subject after this important one must be insipid; I, therefore, bid you good-night. God bless you, my dearest uncle!

Your affectionate
HENRIETTA.

LADY MARCHMONT TO SIR JASPER MEREDITH.

Which was the true philosopher?—the sage
Who to the sorrows and the crimes of life
Gave tears—or he who laughed at all he saw?
Such mockery is bitter, and yet just:
And Heaven well knows the cause there is to weep.
Methinks that life is what the actor is—
Outside there is the quaint and gibing mask;
Beneath, the pale and careworn countenance.

My dear, kind Uncle,—I cannot tell you the effect which the sight of your handwriting had upon me. It was the first letter that I ever had from you in my life. How bitterly it reminded me that we were separated! and yet I was very glad to hear from you. I am ashamed to tell you that I cried like a child before I opened it, or rather before I read it: still, it has made me much happier. It reminded me that there was one person to whom every thing that concerned me was an object of interest; it broke the sense of loneliness that has pressed upon me ever since my arrival.

I do not agree with Mrs. Churchill's sweeping condemnation, "that London is only a great, wicked, expensive place;" but you leave the fairy-land of fancy behind you for ever, on en-

tering it. It is the most real place in the world; you will inevitably be brought to your level. If I were to quit it now, I should quit not liking it all; no one does who, having country habits, comes up for only a short time. The sense of your own insignificance is any thing but pleasant; then you are hurried through a round of amusements for which you have not acquired a relish, they being, as yet, unconnected with any little personal vanities. You suffer from bodily fatigue, because the exertion is of a kind to which you are unaccustomed; moreover, you feel your own deficiencies, and exaggerate both their importance and the difficulty of overcoming them. But this is only "beginning at the beginning;" and I have a very brilliant perspective—I intend to be so courted, so flattered, and so "beautiful." You will laugh at my making up my mind to the last; but I do assure you that a great deal depends on yourself.

The first step towards establishing pretensions of any kind, is to believe firmly in them yourself: faith is very catching, and half the beauty-reputations of which I hear have originated with the possessors. Having determined upon being a beauty, it is absolutely necessary that I should have my portrait taken by Sir Godfrey Kneller: a portrait of his is a positive diploma of loveliness.

Among my new acquaintance is Lady Mary Wortley Montague, who is just returned from Constantinople, where her husband was ambassador. She is very handsome, very amusing, and a little alarming. She tells me, very frankly, that she has taken a great liking to me.

"Not, my dear," said she, "that I profess the least friendship for you—friendship is just an innocent delusion, to round a period in a moral essay. I lay it down as a rule, that all men are rascals to women, and all women rascals to each other. Perhaps very young girls, who do not know what to do with a superabundance of affection, run up a kind of romantic liking for each other; but it never lasts—one good-looking young man would break up all the female friendships that ever were formed. In our secret heart we all hate each other. What I shall expect from you is a little pleasant companionship; and I offer you the same in return."

My protestations of "so flattered," and "too happy," were interrupted by her continuing:—

"The fact is, we have each the charm of novelty. I know every body, and shall put them in the worst possible point of

view. "I shall, therefore, be both useful and agreeable. You at present know nobody, and will like to hear all about them—especially to know the worst: of course, therefore, you will be a good listener. Now, a good listener is the most fascinating of companions. In time I shall have told all I have to tell, and you will have heard all that you care to hear: then our bond of union ceases; and so will our friendship, unless we can in any way make a convenience of each other."

Well, I have made a plunge into the cold bath of her ladyship's acquaintance, and she accompanied me to Sir Godfrey's. It was quite a visit of canvassing, for he has almost given up his profession; it is a favour if he paints you. Lady Mary told me some amusing anecdotes. Among others, she repeated to me a conversation between him and Pope, who called on a visit of condolence during a severe fit of illness. The poet, by way of comfort, gave him every prospect of going to heaven. "Ver good place," replied the invalid, "but I wish *le bon Dieu* would let me stay in my new house—it is good enough for me."

One day, Gay was reading to him a most outrageous panegyric, in which he ascribed to Kneller every virtue under the sun—perhaps a few more. Sir Godfrey heard him with great complacency, only interrupting him by a few approving nods, or a "by Gott, sare, you say de truth." At the close, he highly applauded the performance, but said, "You have done well, Mistere Gay—ver well, as far as you have gone; but you have left me out one great quality. It is good for de Duke of Marlborough, that I was not a soldier, and his enemy. Once, when I was such a little boy, I was on St. Mark's Place in Venice, and dey let off some fireworks. By Gott, I liked de smell of de gunpowder! Ah! sare, I should have made von great general—I should have killed men instead of making dem discontent vith demselves, as my pictures do."

Sir Godfrey is a little, shrewd-looking old man, with manners courteous even to kindness. He received us with the greatest *empressment*, and was in excellent humour, having just recieved a haunch of venison from one of the principal auctioneers. "There," he exclaimed, in a tumult of soft emotion, "is a goot man! He loves me—see what beautiful fat is on his venison!"

A few judicious remarks, while he was showing us his pic-

tures, placed me high in his favour; but my last compliment was the climax.

"I am," said I, in a tone of the most modest hesitation, "afraid, Sir Godfrey, to sit to you. I shall be discontented with my looking-glass for the rest of my life."

"Mine Gott!" exclaimed he, "your ladyship has a genius for de fine arts—you taste, you feel dem. But do not be afraid—you shall only look your best; your picture will teach you de duty you owe to yourself—you must try to look like it."

I thanked him for the glorious ambition which he thus set before me; and we took our leave, saying a profusion of fine things to each other.

You see, my dear uncle, I write to you in the most merciless manner: I spare you nothing that happens to me. At least, details only kept in mind for your sake will show my dearest, kindest uncle, how affectionately he is remembered by his

Grateful and devoted

HENRIETTA.

P. S. Lord Marchmont whenever he sees me writing, sends you a message of equal length and civility. Once named, it will do for always. You can keep it by you like a stock of frozen provision.

CHAPTER VII.

Few know of life's beginnings—men behold
The goal achieved. The warrior, when his sword
Flashes red triumph in the noonday sun;
The poet, when his lyre hangs on the palm;
The statesman, when the crowd proclaim his voice
And mould opinion on his gifted tongue:
They count not life's first steps, and never think
Upon the many miserable hours
When hope deferred was sickness to the heart.
They reckon not the battle and the march,
The long privations of a wasted youth;
They never see the banner till unfurled.
What are to them the solitary nights,
Past pale and anxious by the sickly lamp,
Till the young poet wins the world at last,
To listen to the music long his own?

> The crowd attend the statesman's fiery mind
> That makes their destiny; but they do not trace
> Its struggles, or its long expectancy.
> Hard are life's early steps; and, but that youth
> Is buoyant, confident, and strong in hope,
> Men would behold its threshold, and despair.

Under what different aspects may the same place appear! Walter Maynard arrived in London on the same night with Lady Marchmont. He stopped at an inn suiting his finances. It was in a dark narrow lane in the city; and the young traveller sat down in the public room, where he was half stifled by the smoke, and half deafened by the noise. What a feeling of desolation, and of vastness, had struck upon his heart as he passed through a few of those crowded streets of which there seemed no ending! It seemed impossible but that, amid so many faces, there must be one that he knew: but no; all alike were strangers. He felt himself utterly alone; and, for the first time, shrank when he considered how slender were his resources. A small sum of money, a letter of introduction to Sir Jasper Meredith's bookseller, and a card of address where to find Norbourne Courtenaye when he happened to be in London,—these were his all. He pushed aside his frugal meal with utter distate, and looked around on his companions: at once he felt all conversation with them to be hopeless. He listened to the conversation of the two men next him, who were quarrelling over, rather than discussing, the "Craftsman," which they had just been reading. Both were so decidedly wrong, that it was hardly possible for human nature at twenty-two to avoid setting them right. The consequence was, that the one called him a fool, and the other offered to fight him. A mild, respectable-looking man interfered, and, pacifying the combatants, drew Walter into a corner, and began conversing with him pleasantly enough. The conversation was only a little interrupted by glances from the pretty hostess, who seemed anxious to attract the attention of the handsome young stranger.

"Why, it is later than I thought," exclaimed the stranger, as the clock struck. "Good night, my young friend—I dare say we shall meet again; and let me give you a word of parting advice—never interfere with what does not concern you."

A few minutes after his departure, Walter found that his purse was gone.

"I thought how it would be," cried the landlady; "but I

could not catch your eye. Why, the man you were talking to is a first rate pickpocket—a very clever man. Let me give you a piece of good advice: always be on your guard against strangers; you may be sure that every body wants to take you in."

It is amazing how well the hostess contrived, during the two or three days that Walter remained in the house, to illustrate her theory by practice. Weary and dispirited, Walter retired to the little, close chamber which was his bed-room. One must be uncomfortable to be thoroughly out of sorts. A great sorrow forgets every thing but itself; but little sorrows exaggerate themselves and each other.

As yet our traveller had to contend with only the smaller order. He sat down in the window-seat, in a most profitless mood of dejection. More than once the sweet face of Ethel rose to his mind's eye; but he glanced round his chamber, and dismissed it. He was ashamed of thinking of her in such a position; he felt, with morbid sensitiveness, the social distinction between them. The wings of his fancy seemed to melt, like those of Icarus, now that he approached the sun of his hopes, London. The air of the narrow chamber grew more and more oppressive, and he flung open the window, which looked into a churchyard. The moonlight fell over the white stones which press so heavily on the dust beneath.

"The last churchyard I looked upon," exclaimed Walter, "how different was it from this! There the sweet influences of nature shed their own beauty over the presence of death. The wild flowers sprung up amid the grass; the dew shone on the leaves; and the murmurs of a nameless music stirred the sweeping branches of the oak. Here, all is harsh and artificial: the palpable weight of human care seems upon the thick atmosphere. The very dead are crowded together, and crushed beneath the weight of those dreary-looking stones. "Ah!" exclaimed he, as he turned, with a cold shudder, from the window, "I hope I shall never be buried in a city."

CHAPTER VIII.

ARRIVED AT HOME.

A pale and stately lady, with a brow
That might have well beseemed a Roman dame,
Cornelia, ere her glorious children died;
Or that imperial mother, who beheld
Her son forgive his country at her word.
Yet there was trouble written on her face;
The past had left its darkness.

It was a wretched evening on which Norbourne Courtenaye reached his home. A cold wind, a piercing rain, and a bad road, with a worse hack (for his own horses had been knocked up), rendered more acute the misery which he, as a parted lover, was bound to feel. He felt himself more unhappy at every succeeding mile; and when he arrived—wet through, cold, tired, and hungry—he conceived, very justly, that he was the most unhappy of created beings. Still, it was almost worth while to endure all these sufferings for the sake of such a welcome as awaited him at home. A good fire, and a good dinner, are wonderful restoratives; and Mrs. Courtenaye was so happy at seeing her son again, that he could not but feel happy too. She hung round him, watching his every look as if she grudged the veriest menial offices from the servants; and she almost scolded him for not eating, when he had done justice enough to the good things set before him to have satisfied even the cook herself. Some old writer says, "we like to see those we love eating and sleeping;" and there is much truth in the homely remark. We like them to be the objects of our active care, or of our patient watchfulness.

Mrs. Courtenaye idolized her son, with that intense love which a reserved and proud temper feels for the one and only object on which it lavishes all its hoarded affection. His father had died when his only child was but two years old; and to that child his young, rich, and beautiful widow, had been wholly devoted. Many suitors she certainly had; but even the wildest jest had never given one of them a hope of success. It was said that she spoiled her son—it was not so. Her strong sense and excellent judgment preserved her authority; which was strengthened, not weakened, by the tenderest care

that ever mother bestowed on orphan. From her lips, a reproof was sufficient punishment; for the boy well knew that he was the least sufferer.

Mrs. Courtenaye was rather respected than popular in the neighbourhood: her habits were secluded, though no one dispensed more liberally that hospitality which suited their position in the country. She was of an old Catholic Scotch family, and had been educated in a Spanish convent, which she never left till her marriage with Mr. Courtenaye. Some said that her union with a heretic weighed upon her mind, and that her penances were of an unusually strict order. There was that in her still fine, but careworn features, which seemed to bear out the assertion. She was subject to fits of deep melancholy; and, even in her most social hours, there was a sort of subdued sadness in her eyes; and she never had the glad, frank manner of one whose heart is at ease. Her very fondness for her son had something mournful in it; she seemed to fear the indulgence of all earthly affections. Still, nothing could be more perfect than the union of herself and her child. It was touching to see them together; for, if this cold world has one tie more holy, and more redeemed from all selfish feeling than another, it is that which binds the widow and the orphan together.

His dress changed, and his dinner over, Norbourne followed Mrs. Courtenaye to the drawing-room, where she had left his uncle and cousin. Their way lay through the hall, where hung the helm of many a bold forefather, and arms that had seen service even in the crusades.

"I cannot help, dearest mother," said he, half seriously, half smiling, "having a little respect for myself when I return home. My noble ancestors have bequeathed to me an honourable name:—well, I will at least strive not to disgrace it." Mrs. Courtenaye fondly pressed his hand, and he could see that the tears stood in her eyes. "I should rather have said," exclaimed he, "I will at least try to be worthy of my mother."

They found Lord Norbourne so engaged with a heap of political pamphlets, that he did not at first perceive their entrance. When he did, he welcomed his nephew with great cordiality, —we should rather say courtesy, for Lord Norbourne had never been cordial in his life. He hurried together questions and compliments.

"On my honour, Mrs. Courtenaye, you will make me an advocate for petticoat government, after such a specimen of its

excellent influence. Still, my young friend, I am like the rest of the world--cannot leave well alone—must have you up to town. Sir Robert was inquiring about the representative of our house, only the other day. I, you know, am but a younger brother. But I forget that you have not seen your cousin for an age. You young people must have an immense deal to talk over. There, Norbourne, I consign you to younger and fairer hands."

So saying, he resumed his seat and his pamphlets, in which he appeared completely absorbed. Mrs. Courtenaye took up a religious work, and she, too, turned her face away. Her eyes were resolutely fixed on the page, but she saw it not. Her cheek was pale and cold as marble, and there was that convulsive quiver about the mouth which is the most certain sign of mental agitation.

Norbourne drew kindly towards his cousin Constance. He had for her the affection of early habit, and the tenderness of pity. Delicate and slightly deformed, with only one surviving parent, whose affection chiefly showed itself in ambitious projects for her aggrandizement, there was much in Constance's position that awakened the softest compassion. When Norbourne entered the room, a deep flush of crimson betrayed how instantly she recognised him. The colour had faded, but enough remained to make her look almost pretty; and, if any thing can make a woman look so, it is the presence of him she loves. Poor Constance loved her cousin timidly; for, painfully conscious of her personal defects, she was shy and retiring. During the lives of her sisters, she had been thrown quite in the background; and her cousin had been the only one from whom she had always received support and consideration. How gratefully does a woman repay such a debt!

Norbourne Courtenaye was the only person with whom Constance was at her ease. During the lifetime of her beautiful sisters she had met with so many mortifications that she shrank from all general society; and she had been too secluded, during the last twelvemonth, to know the merits and charms which would inevitably be found in Lord Norbourne's heiress. Of her father she stood in great awe, and of her aunt scarcely less; to which was also added a sense of strangeness. But Norbourne she had known from a child: he had taken her part as a boy, and as a young man had never neglected her; her memory was stored with a thousand slight attentions which he had himself forgotten. After the first flutter of conscious

delight which his entrance had caused, she was able to talk to him cheerfully, and her spirits rose with the unwonted enjoyment.

It may be doubted whether Lord Norbourne was quite as much engrossed by his pamphlets as he appeared; for once or twice, as his daughter's laugh reached his ear his stern features relaxed into a smile, which changed the whole expression of his face. More than once, too, he tried to catch Mrs. Courtenaye's eye; but she was too much absorbed in her book. Norbourne, it must be confessed, was impatient for the close of the evening: he had so much that he wished to tell his mother, and it struck him that she looked unusually pale and harassed. Still his cousin's claims, as a woman's and his guest, were imperative; and, moreover, he felt for a young creature, shut out from so many ordinary sources of enjoyment, and whose life was so solitary. But never had she appeared so utterly uninteresting as now; for Ethel's sweet face shone before him, a sad contrast to the sickly and languid countenance of Constance. Neither had Constance the natural talents of Ethel; she was deficient in all powers of conversation. Accustomed to be repressed and neglected, she lacked courage to say what she thought. What a change from the sweet, uncurbed vivacity of Ethel, whose thoughts sprang directly from the heart into utterance! At length, however, the evening wore away; and, after kindly assisting his cousin across the gallery, Norbourne hurried to his mother's dressing-room: she was just going in, as he asked admission to tell all his adventures.

"Not to-night, my beloved child; you must be tired: not to-night."

She leaned forward to kiss his forehead: he started at the touch, for her lips were cold as ice.

CHAPTER IX.

DIFFERENT VIEWS OF YOUTH AND AGE.

> There was a shadow on his face, that spake
> Of passion long since hardened into thought.
> He had a smile, a cold and scornful smile;

Not gayety, not sweetness, but the sign
Of feelings moulded at their master's will.
A weary world was hidden at that heart;
Sorrow and strife were there, and it had learnt
The weary lessons time and sorrow teach;
And deeply felt itself the vanity
Of love and hope, and now could only feel
Distrust in them, and mockery for those
Who could believe in what he knew was vain.

It was with a natural touch of pride that Norbourne Courtenaye paced his paternal hall, while waiting for his uncle, with whom he was going to ride. It was one of those fine specimens of Norman architecture which yet attest the taste of that stately race. It was lined with oak, long since black with age, richly carved in all the quaint devices of art, then in its childhood; but the arms of the family, the crest, and the motto, were conspicuous every where. Around were those memorials to which time gives such value—several complete suits of armour, each belonging to some honourable name, whose deeds were the theme of legendary story. The dark plumes yet waved over each helmet, the slight feather outlasting the stalwart warrior on whose head it had once danced: a fragile thing, yet more enduring than its master. There were stands, too of curious arms—some strange and foreign-looking eastern cimeters, whose crooked steel had been brought from Palestine: others, of a more recent date, had equally their history. There were the short heavy carbines, and the richly mounted pistols, which had done their duty in the parliamentary wars, when the Courtenayes followed the fortunes of the ill-fated Charles. The gallant history came down to the present time; for there were the colours which his father had taken from a French battery with his own hands, at the battle of Blenheim, and for which he had received the thanks of Marlborough.

The Gothic windows of painted glass

"Taught light to counterfeit a gloom;"

and the rich purple and yellow dies fell, in gorgeous confusion, on the relics around. A magnificent prospect lay beyond. On one side, you could see only the vast extent of park, whose oaks might have served as temples to the Druids: deer were feeding on the sunny slopes; and on a noble lake you saw the glittering of the morning light on the white wings of the swans. On the south side, the view was more varied:

fields and orchards were obviously in a state of high cultivation; and a church, built by his grandfather, crowned the hill. Below, cottages peeped from among the trees, realizing all the painter could have wished of quiet and cheerfulness. The view stretched away like a panorama, lost in the gray and misty tints which mingle with the sunshine of an October morning. Far as the eye could reach all was his own: his forefathers had built those cottages, had planted those trees. He could not look around without the consciousness of power.

I frankly confess that I have a respect for family pride. If it be a prejudice, it is prejudice in its most picturesque shape; but I hold that it is connected with some of the noblest feelings in our nature. Is it nothing to be connected with the history of one's country, and to feel

> The name of every noble ancestor
> A bond upon your soul against disgrace?

—No one, who admits the rule, can deny its exceptions; but I believe the pride of blood to have a beneficial influence. It is much to feel, that the high and the honourable belong to a name that is pledged to the present by recollections of the past.

It would have been difficult to find a finer specimen of the English aristocracy than the handsome and intelligent young man on whom his uncle's eye had fixed on entering. There was something peculiar in that gaze. It was obviously one of pride in its object; but there was also sadness, which gradually changed into an expression of harsh determination. There was something, however, contagious in the glad, frank greeting of his nephew; something, too, in the soft clear morning air, that Lord Norbourne could not quite resist. He sprang on horseback with a feeling of vague enjoyment, which he was as little as any man in the habit of experiencing.

"Whither shall we ride," said he, after they had cantered a little distance over the soft grass of the park. The influence of custom, that second nature, stronger even than the first, was upon him; he had enjoyed himself quite enough—he now wanted an object.

"There is a splendid view from those hills, or —"

Here Norbourne was interrupted by his uncle laughing much louder than he often permitted himself to do.

"Why, my dear boy," exclaimed he, "what have you ever seen in me to imagine I cared for any prospect that did not ter-

minate in Whitehall? Green trees and blue skies are very well in their way; I believe indispensable to painters, and useful to poets: I was not aware that I figured in either department."

"No one ever suspected, or even accused you of such proceedings," replied Norbourne, smiling at the idea of his lordship in either capacity; "but can you not understand enjoying the country for its own sake?"

"No, I cannot," replied his companion, drily.

"Is it possible?" cried his nephew, eagerly. "I cannot ride along, this lovely morning, without a thrill of delight. My whole frame seems lighter; a thousand subtle influences excite my spirits; I catch beauties I never saw before, and long for some one to admire with me."

"All this," replied the other, "only proves what a good constitution you have, and that you are very young. I dare say you will grow more rational in time."

"More rational!" cried Norbourne; "nay, now, I have all the high authorities. Is not this delicious quiet, this serenity of rural enjoyment, the one admitted happiness of human existence; that which the statesman craves, and the philosopher holds forth, as the golden secret of life?"

"Statesmen and philosophers too," replied Lord Norbourne, "often talk a great deal of nonsense. Half of what are called our finest sentiments originate in the necessity of rounding a sentence. Lord Bolingbroke writes, with an eloquence which would make an enthusiast rave, about the dignity and delight of retirement: I do not find that he intrigues with one atom less of activity to obtain a place in the ministry."

"Do you know him?" asked Norbourne, eagerly.

"Ah! he is one of your idols, I suppose," said Lord Norbourne, with a slight approach to a sneer. "Youth is prone to admire; but it is odd how, in a few years, we discover the defects of our demigods. At first we look only to the head of the image, which is of gold: we soon find the necessity of looking down to earth, were it but to find out our path; and then we discover that our idol has feet of clay!"

"Is there no such thing as excellence?" exclaimed his listener.

"Very far from it. I admit that there are a great many excellent things in this world; Sir Robert's last measures, for example," returned his uncle, half-smiling. "I would only warn you against youth's usual error of believing and expecting

too much—not that I expect you to take my warning. I do not often give advice; first, because it is a bad habit that of giving any thing; and, secondly, because I always think of the ambassador's answer to Oliver's declaration, 'that if the court of Spain cut off his head, he would send them the heads of every Spaniard in his dominions.' 'Yes, please your highness,' returned the diplomatist, 'but among them all there may not be one to fit my shoulders.' In like manner, with all our choice of other people's experience, there is never any that suits us but our own."

"In the meantime," said Norbourne, "We have arrived at the park gate, and have not determined whither we shall ride."

> 'Crowded cities please me then,
> And the busy scenes of men.'

"For 'then,' substitute 'always,' and Milton has just expressed my sentiments," replied his uncle. "The 'crowded cities' are unattainable, but there are still 'the busy haunts of men.' Let us go and call on some of our neighbours. After all, the country may be interesting when there is a rumour of a general election."

CHAPTER X.

> Ah! waking dreams, that mock the day,
> Have other ends than those
> That come beneath the moonlight ray,
> And charm the eyes they close.
>
> The vision, colouring the night,
> 'Mid bloom and brightness wakes,
> Banished by morning's cheerful light,
> Which brightens what it breaks.
>
> But dreams, which fill the waking eye
> With deeper spells than sleep,
> When hours unnumbered pass us by;
> From such we wake and weep.
>
> We wake, but not to sleep again,
> The heart has lost its youth;
> The morning light that wakes us then,
> Cold, calm, and stern, is truth.

NORBOURNE was amply repaid for giving up his gallop over the hills, by the curious study which his uncle presented. He

was astonished at the facility with which Lord Norbourne seemed to divine the character of each individual, and how he contrived to adapt himself to it. He avoided politics, and yet often managed to make Sir Robert Walpole the subject of discourse; but it was only to tell some favourable personal anecdote. Once or twice he was fairly entangled in an argument; and each time he allowed himself to be convinced on some minor point, which left, however, the original subject quite untouched.

An allusion to some pamphlets which had just made a noise, induced Norbourne to mention Walter Maynard to his uncle in terms of warm praise.

"He realises," exclaimed he, warmly, "all one ever imagines of genius. He has the keenest sensibility, and this gives him the key to the sensibility of others. He is eloquent, for his heart is in his words; and he has that passionate melancholy which is the true element of poetry."

"Say no more," interrupted Lord Norbourne; "you have described the man of all others the most unfitted to struggle with the actual world. His sensibility will make him alive to a thousand annoyances, which would be scarcely perceptible to one of colder mould; his eloquence will obtain just admiration enough to deceive him; and his melancholy only asks a few years' experience to deepen into utter despondency. Still, give me his town address; I will, if I can, serve any friend of yours."

"He has wonderful talents," continued his friend.

"Talents," resumed Lord Norbourne, "of this high and imaginative order, seem to me rather given to benefit others than their possessor. Their harvest is in the future, not the present. Their brains produce the golden ore, which commoner hands mould to the daily purposes of life."

"I think," replied the young advocate, unwilling to give up a point in which his feelings were interested, "that even you would believe in Walter Maynard's success in life, if you knew him. What has brought the world to its present state, but individual talent?"

"I do not deny your assertion," said his uncle; "but minds of the higher order are not the best suited to ordinary use. I cannot express my meaning better than by using a simile of our opponent, the Irish dean. Swift says,—'take a finely-polished razor, and you will waste your labour in getting through a ream of paper, which you need to cut: a coarse bone knife

will answer your purpose much better.' Now, your fine-minded man is the razor, and I leave you to make the application."

"Well," replied Courtenaye, "I commend him to your kindness, and beg you to put your judgment out of the question."

"A very common method of acting in this life. But," continued Lord Norbourne, "you can form wishes for a friend—have you none for yourself? I am amazed to see a young man of your appearance and talents—though, after I have been thus depreciating the latter, it is almost an affront to say any thing about those you possess—I am amazed to see you vegetating among your own oaks, as if, like them, growth were your only value."

"I often visit London," replied Norbourne.

"Yes," interrupted his uncle, with something between a smile and a sneer, "to decide on the merits of rival actresses; to bear away a few *bon-mots* from the coffee-houses; to see that the fashion of your hair is not too much behind hand; and to choose the newest embroidery for your waistcoat."

Norbourne coloured; for there was, at least, truth enough in the description to make it come home.

"As little do I think that your country pursuits deserve to engross your time. Life was given for something better than sitting after fish, walking after birds, and riding after hares."

"As well, my dear uncle," said Courtenaye, laughing, "as tying up your whole life with red tape."

Lord Norbourne smiled.

"We will not try any more attempts at wit. Wit only gains you the reputation of being hard-hearted, which it is very well to be in reality, but not to have the reputation of being. It shocks people's little innocent prejudices, and these I always respect when I can. Indeed, the only character I ever found of any use to man, was that of having no character at all."

"That is the very fault I find with your faction," exclaimed his hearer, eagerly. "It is too much the fashion to decry all lofty moral purpose, to disbelieve in public virtue, and to destroy all high excellence by a crushing disbelief in its excellence."

"That is to say," answered his uncle, calmly, "that Sir Robert knows the world, instead of imagining it: he deals with facts, not sentiments. But I will speak seriously, for it is a subject on which I wish you both to think and act. Look at

the results of the Walpole administration—peace and prosperity. We are feared abroad, and tranquil at home. You may easily find finer theories than ours, but I appeal to our practice."

Norbourne remained in attentive silence; while his uncle's quick eye noted the impression he had made, and then continued :—

"You might do any thing with your undecided neighbourhood, and your position points you out as its leader. Ah! I wish that you had the political eagerness of Sir Robert's younger son, Horace; who, hearing some one, during a dispute, say, 'Why we have opinions enough on our side to form a sect!' exclaimed,—'but have you enough to form a party?'"

CHAPTER XI.

OPINIONS.

> He scorned them from the centre of his heart,
> For well he knew mankind; and he who knows
> Must loathe or pity. He who dwells apart,
> With books, and nature, and philosophy,
> May lull himself with pity; he who dwells
> In crowds and cities, struggling with his race,
> Must daily see their falsehood and their faults,
> Their cold ingratitude, their selfishness:
> How can he choose but loathe them?

At any other time, Norbourne Courtenaye would have been delighted at his uncle's visit; which, had it been but six months sooner, would have presented a very different aspect. Lord Norbourne was one of those men who made it his boast, that he had succeeded in whatever he undertook. We beg his lordship's pardon; he never boasted of any thing: he knew Fortune too well to tempt her by a defiance. No two people are more different in outward seeming, than a man sometimes grows to differ from himself. Twenty-five and fifty are epochs which bear no resemblance. In the reserved, cautious, yet bland and insinuating statesman, no one could have recognised the gay, wild, and extravagant young man that Lord Norbourne had once been. A younger brother, he had been the architect of his own fortunes; and having one's own way to make in the world is not the best possible method towards giving a good opinion of it. One by one Lord Norbourne had left behind

him the generous belief, the warm affection, and the elevated sentiment. If he now thought at all about them, it was only to think how much, and how often, they had been imposed upon. The fault of his system was, that he gave the head an undue preponderance over the heart. It was the inevitable result of his experience: there are no weaknesses which we so thoroughly despise as those to which ourselves have yielded; and no faults strike us so forcibly as our own, when they are past.

The same process leads to different results. Sir Jasper Meredith hated mankind, Lord Norbourne only despised them; the one had exaggerated his feelings in solitude, the other had dispersed them in society; the one shrunk from his fellows, the other delighted in making them his tools: the sense of superiority was thus gratified in both. Sir Jasper undervalued worldly honours; Lord Norbourne even over-estimated their advantages. The difference lay in this: Sir Jasper had led a life of wild adventure in foreign lands; seeking excitement for excitement's sake; gaining riches by lucky chances; and, wearied out both in mind and body, sinking into solitude at last, while he gathered round him all the bitterest recollections of the past. Lord Norbourne, on the contrary, had led a life of business, in the same city and same court; he had taken his daily lessons in small intrigues for smaller ends.

The success and the disappointment alike belonged to the one aim—worldly success. He ended with being rich, a peer, and in the minister's confidence; while the insecurity which, in a government like ours, attends political elevation, kept away any approach to satiety. He had not gone through life without learning its many bitter lessons; but the moral he drew from them was a sneer. Moreover, the habits of business are the most enduring of any; and Lord Norbourne's most positive enjoyment was in what are called the fatigues of office. Still he lingered in the country, and every day his nephew took greater delight in his society. There was something very flattering to the self-love of any young man in the easy confidence of one so distinguished, and usually so reserved. The polished misanthropy, too, of Lord Norbourne's sarcasm was delightful to one who felt in his own heart the deep enjoyment of disbelief.

It was an unusually mild and lovely evening that they were loitering on the banks of the lake. The sun was just setting—a conqueror as he went down; for every cloud that had flitted about during the day, now gathered on the west, mantling with

crimson and gold. There was something triumphal in the rich colouring that arrayed every object. The vivid green of the oaks stood out more distinct amid the scarlet of the sycamore and the yellow of the thyme, together with the rich brown that was covering the chestnuts. The grass, too, of the park was in strong contrast to the purple heath that clothed the distance, only broken by the blossoming furze, which intersected it like a golden sea: a faint perfume came on the air, more subtle even than the breath of flowers; it was like the last sigh of each falling leaf, that flitted by noiseless as a ghost.

To me there is no season so lovely as the autumn. There is a gayety about the spring with which I have no sympathy: its perpetual revival of leaf and bloom is too great a contrast to the inner world, where so many feelings lie barren, and so many hopes withered. There is an activity about it, from which the wearied spirits shrink; and a joyousness, which but makes you turn more sadly upon yourself; but about autumn there is a tender melancholy inexpressibly soothing; decay is around, but such is in your own heart. There is a languor in the air which encourages your own, and the poetry of memory is in every drooping flower and falling leaf. The very magnificence of its Assyrian array is touched with the light of imagination: even while you watch it, it passes away as your brightest hopes have done before.

The lake, on whose bank Courtenaye and his uncle were standing, was just then an object of singular beauty. The sky was reflected in its depths in huge masses of crimson shadow, which softened away into a deep purple mirror, clear and motionless, saving when the swans swept slowly across, leaving behind a vein of violet light.

"Can you," said Norbourne, "be quite insensible to the beauty of a scene like this? It enters into my very heart: I feel a kindlier disposition to the whole human race."

"Nay, nay," exclaimed Lord Norbourne, "I cannot go quite so far as that. I have, thanks to your hospitality, laid in a stock of health enough for the ensuing winter: but as to the general benevolence of which you talk, I confess I find no symptoms: if I did, they would alarm me more than those of the gout."

"But, my dear uncle," asked his young hearer, "is it not a pleasanter thing to think well of one's species?"

"Pleasanter, I grant you," replied his uncle; "but one always pays for one's pleasures. Now I am arrived at an age

when one grows economical on that head. I do not agree with Waller, who says,

> 'Surely the pleasure is as great
> In being cheated as to cheat.'

At all events, there is small enjoyment in being cheated with one's eyes open, which would be my present case. My opinion of my kind is couched in St. Simon's answer to Louis XIV.—'Is there any thing,' asked the king, 'that you despise more than men?' 'Yes,' replied the duke—'woman.'"

"I had hoped," said Norbourne, "that you had some soft relentings in favour of the fairer sex."

"Not I," answered Lord Norbourne; "women have all our faults, heightened by a falsehood and inconsistency peculiarly their own. You may make a man understand his real interests; now, a woman you never can. Of all materials with which it may be my evil fate to work, I especially abjure and abhor the fanciful."

"Really, my dear uncle, you make me very uncomfortable," exclaimed Courtenaye, laughing. "Do you not even believe in love?"

"Yes," was the reply,—"as I do in the hooping-cough, or the measles; as a sort of juvenile disease to be got over as soon as possible. If young people would but consider,—a thing which young people never do,—they would find that love is its own cure. Gratified, it dies of satiety; ungratified, of forgetfulness. Let any man, in the course of a few years, look back upon the most desperate passion he ever experienced, and he will find himself not only cured, but ashamed of it."

Norbourne walked on in silence: he felt too keenly to like to speak of his feelings. He shrank from mentioning his engagement to his uncle. It was almost sacrilege to mention Ethel's name with a chance even of sarcasm or of blame.

> '——Cato's a proper person
> To intrust a love tale with!'

So he kept his thoughts "in their sweet silence;" and when Lord Norbourne returned to the house, long did he linger by that lonely lake, recalling a thousand looks and words which, lovely as they seemed at the time, grew even lovelier thus remembered. What impossible things inconstancy or indiffe-

rence appeared to Norbourne! Never did young worshipper more devoutly believe in the divinity of love.

"For nothing in this wide world would I give up my sweet Ethel." It was almost like parting with herself when he left the lake-side.

CHAPTER XII.

DIFFICULTIES.

I do not ask to offer thee
  A timid love like mine;
I lay it as the rose is laid,
  On some immortal shrine.

I have no hope in loving thee,
  I only ask to love;
I brood upon my silent heart,
  As on its nest the dove.

But little have I been beloved,
  Sad, silent, and alone;
And yet I feel, in loving thee,
  The wide world is mine own.

Thine is the name I breathe to Heaven,
  Thy face is on my sleep;
I only ask that love like this
  May pray for thee and weep.

AGREEABLE as Norbourne Courtenaye found his uncle's society, he could not but perceive that it operated, in some strange way, as a restraint upon his mother. For the first time in her life she avoided all his attempts at obtaining an hour's quiet conversation. She kept herself almost entirely to her own apartments; and when she made her appearance at table, it was with a worn and haggard countenance, and a frame that her son could see wasting before his very eyes. All Lord Norbourne's efforts to draw her into conversation were vain: she would start and turn pale if he suddenly addressed her; though, the moment after she would recover herself, and evince absolute anxiety to address him. Norbourne was convinced that there was some secret; and the deep respect and affection he felt for a parent who had been every thing to him,

made him reluctant to inquire into aught that she might wish concealed. Yet what possible mystery could there be? He was fretted and irresolute. Besides, what would Ethel think of his silence?

Another cause for embarrassment began to occasion him considerable uneasiness. He found that the report of his marriage with his cousin was universal. That, however, was of small consequence, compared with a consciousness, that daily forced itself upon him, of a preference on the part of that cousin. It would be too cruel to encourage such a fancy for a moment. He could not but perceive that the faint colour never visited her pale cheek but when he spoke to her; that her eyes unconsciously followed him; and that the slightest opinion he expressed became, from that moment, hers.

One morning he had admired the perfume of a rare flower which she had in her hand. A taste for flowers had been among her few enjoyments, and her father had indulged this taste at a most lavish cost: the hot-house at Norbourne Park was the admiration of the country. The next morning he found the room he deemed peculiarly his own, filled with plants of the same description. Constance had sent to the Park for them. There was nothing in the attention beyond that ready kindness which is so essentially feminine; but the manner in which she received his acknowledgments was much: there was an embarrassment so far beyond the occasion, and a happiness not less obvious because it was rather betrayed than confessed. But Norbourne himself loved, and love has a ready sympathy with love.

Love is a new intelligence entered into the being; it is the softest, but the most subtle light; in all experience it deceives itself; but how many truths does it teach,—how much knowledge does it impart! It makes us alive to a thousand feelings, of whose very existence, till then, we had not dreamed. The poet's page has a new magic: we comprehend all that had before seemed graceful exaggeration; we now find that poetry falls short of what it seeks to express; and we take a new delight in the musical language that seems made for tenderness.

Even into philosophy is carried the deeper truth of the heart —and how many inconsistencies are at once understood! We grow more indulgent, more pitying; and one sweet weakness of our own leads to so much indulgence for others. We doubt, however, whether the term weakness be not misapplied

in this case. If there be one emotion that redeems our humanity by stirring all that is generous and unselfish within us, that awakens all the poetry of our nature, and that makes us believe in that heaven of which it bears the likeness, it is love: love, spiritual, devoted, and eternal; love that softens the shadow of the valley of death, to welcome us after to its own and immortal home. Some Greek poet says,—"What does he know who has not suffered?" He might have asked,—"What does he know who has not loved?" Alas! both questions are synonymous. God help the heart that breaks with its after knowledge!"

How sad seemed the lot of a young girl, touched by all the keen susceptibilities of youth, full of gentle and shrinking tenderness, fated to be unreturned! Nothing can compensate to a woman for the want of exterior attraction. There is a nameless fascination about beauty, which seems, like all fairy gifts, crowded into one. It wins without an effort, and obtains credit for possessing every thing else. How many mortifications, from its very cradle, has the unpleasing exterior to endure! To be unloved—what a fate for a woman whose element is love!

Poor Constance was originally pretty: the outline of the features was still graceful, but long sickness had contracted, and given an expression of suffering; while all colouring had faded into a cold white. The eyes were heavy, and their naturally soft blue was dim and faded before its time. Her figure was slight; but the cruel accident—a fall in her childhood, which had laid the foundation of her ill health—had made her a little aside, and caused a degree of lameness, which rendered it difficult for her to move without assistance. The only positive beauty she possessed was a profusion of hair of the softest gold, which gave the pale face around which it hung almost the likeness of a spirit. What a contrast to the bright and blooming image of Ethel Churchill which was treasured in Norbourne's memory!

CHAPTER XIII.

A PROPOSAL OF MARRIAGE.

What mockeries are our most firm resolves!
To will is ours, but not to execute.
We map our future like some unknown coast,
And say, "Here is an harbour, here a rock—
The one we will attain, the other shun:"
And we do neither. Some chance gale springs up
And bears us far o'er some unfathomed sea.
Our efforts are all vain; at length we yield
To winds and waves, that laugh at man's control.

The next morning there was more restraint than usual at the breakfast-table. Norbourne was amazed that, though his mother had refused, on the excuse of a headache, his petition for an interview, she had afterwards received Lord Norbourne, and their conversation had lasted nearly two hours. That its effect had been a sleepless night, at least, to Mrs. Courtenaye, was obvious from her haggard appearance; and her hand was so unsteady, that it was with difficulty she raised her cup to her lips. There was something, too, in Lord Norbourne's face that expressed anxiety; though his set brow and contracted lip, marked determination. Scarcely did his quiet and restrained manner give outward sign of what was working within. He would have conversed as usual; but his attempts were so ill seconded, that he was fain to take refuge in the letters that lay beside him. Courtenaye himself was lost in thought. What could be the meaning of his mother's restraint and suffering—her reluctance to see himself? What could be the cause of estrangement between a parent and child, hitherto so united? One only cause presented itself. Could there be a second marriage in the case? But the thought was rejected even as it rose; it was like sacrilege: so haughty, so cold, so devoted to himself—it was impossible.

But Norbourne's was no temper to remain patient amid so much doubt and annoyance. His unwillingness to urge any point upon which a mother he idolized seemed disinclined to enter, had hitherto kept him silent; but now silence seemed false delicacy, and he owed to himself to investigate the mystery which oppressed his once easy and happy home. He felt, too,

that he was acting unjustly by Ethel: he had allowed a fortnight to elapse—he startled when he numbered up the days; it is strange how we allow them to glide imperceptibly away. He resolved no longer to delay the avowal of his engagement. Had his mother permitted it, she would have received his first confidence: as it was, to acknowledge his attachment became a duty to her who was now his first and dearest object.

With these thoughts passing in his mind, it may be supposed how much the cook's feelings would have been hurt, could she have known how the collared eels and raised pies, on which she had expended her utmost skill, were neglected.

Constance was the happiest one of the party: accustomed to have her observations disregarded, her faculty of observation was but little cultivated; equally accustomed to silence, it was more natural in her eyes that people should not talk than that they should. It was enough for her to sit by her cousin's side, to breathe the air that he breathed, to catch his least look and lightest word. At even a little usual civility of the table from him she blushed; and if her eyes met his for a moment, they filled with light, which none who saw them at another time, spiritless and drooping, would have believed their faint azure could possess.

It was a beautiful feeling that which warmed the pale cheek of the youthful Constance. It was love in its gentlest, tenderest, and least earthly essence. It was hopeless; for, in her humility, she had never dreamed of return: it was unalloyed by any meaner motive of vanity or of interest, and surrendered its whole existence in a spirit of the purest and meekest devotion. The young and loving heart needed some object of which it might dream, in its many lonely hours, and on which it might lavish its great wealth of fresh and deep affection.

There is nothing to which you so soon become accustomed as to the presence of the beloved one; the gentle chain of habit easily becomes a sweet necessity. Constance had now lived a fortnight in the same house with her cousin, and it already seemed the most natural thing in the world to see him every day. This morning, however, her enjoyment was doomed to be curtailed; for she had scarcely finished her breakfast, before her father gently reminded her of a promise she had given to sort some letters for him.

"I shall make you quite my little secretary in time," said he, with one of his own peculiarly sweet smiles.

To Constance's affectionate temper, her father's kind look or

word was more than enough to recompense any sacrifice, and she left even her cousin's side with almost gladness. Norbourne's whole attention was riveted on his mother. She all but started from her seat when Lord Norbourne told his daughter to go; and, as Constance left the room, she rose with an intention of following, and then sat down, pale and trembling, as if she equally dreaded to stay or go.

"You are ill, my dearest mother!" exclaimed Norbourne, springing to her side.

Lord Norbourne rose also; and his movement seemed to recall Mrs. Courtenaye to herself. She rose calmly; and, saying to her son,—"I shall expect you in half an hour; I wish to have some conversation with you;" she, also, quitted the apartment.

Courtenaye thought the intermediate space a good opportunity of telling his uncle that his affections were irrevocably engaged. He had surmised, once or twice lately, that Lord Norbourne was not so careless of Constance as he seemed to be, and that the report of their marriage was not without his sanction. However painful the subject might be, the sooner any such idea was put an end to the better, for the sake of all parties.

"My mother has of late," said he, "been as inaccessible as a minister of state, and I want to talk to her about my marriage."

"You are thinking, then, of the holy and blessed state, as it is called, of matrimony?—I guessed as much," replied his uncle. I have observed lately that you do not hear above half that is said to you; and the next thing that a young man loses, after his heart, is his hearing."

"There have been cases, I believe," returned Courtenaye, with a forced smile, "when a man has wished that the last-mentioned loss would continue."

"By the saffron robe of Hymen," cried Lord Norbourne, "but that would be a blessing! I own that I am no great friend to marriage in general; in nine cases out of ten, the opinion of the French poet, Marivaux, is mine also:—

'I would advise a man to pause
Before he take a wife;
Indeed, I own, I see no cause
He should not pause for life.

"If a young man has his way to make in the world, a wife is a

dead weight upon his hands. Indeed, I have looked upon the fable of Sisyphus as an allegory, and that his wife was the stone which so perpetually rolled back upon his hands, effectually retarding his weary progress up-hill.

Norbourne smiled, and remained silent, for nothing repels confidence so much as raillery: how can you be confiding when your hearer is only witty? Lord Norbourne, however, continued speaking, and now more seriously.

"Situated as you are, my dear Courtenaye, the case is quite different; an heir is indispensable to an illustrious family, and your name entails upon you the necessity of a worthy alliance."

"My choice," interrupted Norbourne, "would do credit to any house."

"It is not for me to contradict you," said his uncle, with a politer bow than the occasion seemed to require.

"I am so glad of your approbation," exclaimed Courtenaye.

"You need never have doubted it," was the courteous reply; "Constance —"

"Constance!" ejaculated Norbourne, "I—"

"Ah! I see," interrupted Lord Norbourne, "that you think me even more ambitious than I am. I know that my heiress might look to the highest honours of the peerage, but I prefer yourself to the first duke in the land."

"But my dear uncle," interrupted Norbourne,—

"No modesty, and no raptures," cried Lord Norbourne, as he turned to the door; "the pastoral and the heroic age are alike past away with me. Besides, your mother expects you; and I do not think that a lady ought to be kept waiting, unless it be at an assignation, and then it is a useful moral lesson."

The door closed after him, and his nephew felt that he had been completely out-generaled. He now saw, what he had only suspected before, that his uncle wished him to marry Constance.

"Why put such nonsense into her head?" But, even while he spoke, he reproached himself: his very love for Ethel made him sensible how dreadful was the existence to which love came not.

"But," continued he, "she is young, gentle,—nay, sometimes almost pretty; she may yet find an unoccupied heart."

To this he might have added, that she was one of the first heiresses in England; but Norbourne was too young, and too enthusiastic, to balance interest and affection for one moment in the scales together. I believe all the good that is sometimes said of human nature when I remember the feelings of youth

and it is this principle explains why men whose "hearts are dry as summer's dust," often delight in the society of the very young. The sympathy is awakened by memory.

Wallenstein exclaims of Max Piccolomini:

> "For, oh! he stood beside me like my youth."

The stern and worldly general saw in the young and ardent all that he had himself once been—generous, confiding, impatient of evil, confident of good, devoted and affectionate: all these must have passed away from one whose career had been in courts and camps, where he had learned the falsehood of the one, and the indifference of the other. He saw himself in his youthful officer: such was he no longer; still it was pleasant to think that he had had in him so much of good.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE CONFESSION.

> Life has dark secrets; and the hearts are few
> That treasure not some sorrow from the world—
> A sorrow silent, gloomy, and unknown,
> Yet colouring the future from the past.
> We see the eye subdued, the practised smile,
> The word well weighed before it pass the lip,
> And know not of the misery within:
> Yet there it works incessantly, and fears
> The time to come; for time is terrible,
> Avenging and betraying.

Norbourne paused, with an irresolution for which he himself could not account, as he approached the door of his mother's room.

The future has a more subtle sympathy with the present than our imperfect nature can analyze. Who has not felt that nameless shadow upon the spirit, which indicates the coming trouble as surely as the over-hanging cloud foretells the thunderstorm? The external world is full of signs; and so is the internal, if we knew but how to trace them. There is the weight on the air before the tempest; there is the weight on the heart as the coming evil approaches.

Scorning himself for his folly, Courtenaye made an effort and opened the door; but almost unconsciously to himself, he did it slowly and softly. He entered unperceived, and saw his mother prostrate before the cross; her face was buried in her hand, and the whole attitude bespoke humiliation and despair. It was as if she had dashed herself upon the floor in the last agony of an overburdened spirit, which seeks solace in prayer, and finds it not. Norbourne sprang to her side, and, raising her in his arms, exclaimed,—

"For God's sake, my beloved mother, let this mystery cease! Whatever be your sorrow, let your child share it. Can I do nothing for you?"

For the first time in her life, Mrs. Courtenaye let her head sink on her son's shoulder, and burst into a passionate flood of tears. Strange, for a woman and a widow, it was the first time that he had seen her shed such. What must be the force of that grief which thus utterly subdued one so proud, and so self-controlled! Norbourne carried rather than led her to a seat; and, lavishing upon her every tender and soothing epithet, implored her to tell him the worst. He was struck to see how she mastered herself. The sobs were swallowed down, the tears dashed aside; and, with one kindly pressure of the hand, she went to the inner room, saying, in a low but unbroken voice.—"In five minutes, my child."

Norbourne was left alone, and, insensibly, his eye was caught by the gloomy appearance of the room. The black hangings yet remained that had been put up at his father's death, but they were faded and somewhat torn. There was no carpet on the black oak floor, through whose crevices the wind came with that dreary sound which seems peculiar to it when it enters the dwelling of man. The wind, amid the green leaves and the breathing flowers, goes its way in music; it is the sweet and mystic song of universal nature. But it enters into our dwellings, and it learns there the accent of pain; it breathes what it bears away—the sigh that tells, even in the midnight hours, of unrest, and the voice of lamentation, that speaks but in solitude. These echoes accumulate, and the house that has stood for years retains within its wall complaints long since lost in air: but the wind that heard, recalls them; and there is a strange likeness to humanity in its murmurs, as it howls mournfully along the vaulted ceiling, or shrieks through the winding passages.

Its dreary influence was on Norbourne, though he knew it not, and added to the disconsolate effect of the chamber. He

knew that it was his mother's sitting-room, and yet there was not a single object that indicated feminine taste or presence. Chair and table were alike of deal; and, from the damp appearance of the grate, where the fire scarcely struggled into warmth, he surmised, and truly, that a fire was rarely lighted there. The only picture was the martyrdom of St. Sebastian; and Norbourne shuddered at the terrible truth, which gave so vivid a representation of torture. The crucifix, on which the Saviour was extended in his last agony, occupied a recess; and, beyond these, not an object caught the attention: all around depicted suffering and gloom.

But Norbourne had little time to dwell on the life of ascetic penance to which, it was obvious, his mother had condemned herself; for she came from the inner apartment. Stern must have been the mental discipline that had so banished all trace of emotion. Her clear olive cheek was pale, and the lip colourless; but so had they been for years. Perhaps the large black eyes had a brightness that had since left their thoughtful depths, but the scarcely checked tears glistened on the eyelids. Her tall figure was drawn up to its utmost; and the long black flowing garments and veil might have suited the abbess of some strict and proud order, who had renounced the world—its hopes, its feelings, and its vanities. But a nearer glance would have belied the first surmise. The lip was white, but it was tremulous; and human emotion was in the passionate paleness, and in the dark and glistening eyes. Mrs. Courtenaye took her seat; and, after a moment's silence, said—but the voice was hollow and constrained through all its effort at calmness,—

"I wished, my dear Norbourne, to express my entire approval of your marriage with your cousin—"

"My marriage with my cousin," interrupted Norbourne, "will never take place. My uncle is so accustomed to arrange every body's affairs for them, that he forgets that I am the first person to be consulted in an affair like this. I admire and like my uncle, but will not be dictated to. Once, for all, my dear mother, I will not marry Constance Courtenaye."

"Think," exclaimed his mother, eagerly, "on the advantages of the alliance. You know very well that your estate, fine as it is, is burdened by heavy mortgages, which Constance's noble fortune would at once redeem."

"And, by the sacrifice of all my best feelings and dearest hopes, I might," cried Norbourne, "command a few luxuries to which I am perfectly indifferent."

"You are wrong," replied Mrs. Courtenaye: "luxury is but a trifle—not so power and position. With an unencumbered estate, you take the first place in the county; you obtain the finest field for the exertion of your talents: and England has no distinction to which you may not reasonably aspire."

"But I am not ambitious," returned Norbourne.

"It is what every man ought to be," interrupted his mother. "I should, from my inmost soul, despise any one who, with your advantages, could voluntarily sit down to a country life of indolent seclusion."

"I have no such idea," replied her son; "but my future does not depend on my marrying my cousin."

"It does, it does!" interrupted Mrs. Courtenaye, vehemently.

"You overvalue the advantages of the alliance," said Norbourne; "but, even were they tenfold, it would be of no avail to urge them upon me. My heart, my faith, are pledged to another."

"Do not tell me so!" almost shrieked his listener. "Norbourne, I charge you, by your mother's blessing, to marry your cousin—I command, I entreat you!"

Norbourne stood startled into silence by her sudden vehemence: it was but for a moment; and he continued, calmly, but kindly,—

"My mother's command would be sacred in any matter less intimately connected with my happiness and my honour."

"They cannot," said Mrs. Courtenaye, with such utter sadness of tone that Norbourne started at the sound, "be dearer to yourself than they are to me. Do not for some foolish fancy—"

"Nay," interrupted Courtenaye, "I would not present to you a daughter unworthy of yourself. The fortune, the family, of Miss Churchill are equal to my own; and as to herself—"

"Do not talk of her!" exclaimed his mother. "I implore you, think of the claims that your cousin has on your forbearance—your pity: she loves you."

Norbourne coloured, and then said, gravely,—"I do not wish to hear this even from you. My cousin's feelings are too delicate for even our confidence."

"You are content, then, to repay the affection you have yourself inspired with the coldest ingratitude?" asked Mrs. Courtenaye.

"My dearest mother," cried the youth, "your desire for my advantageous settlement makes you unjust. You know well

that nothing in my conduct has ever authorised Constance to fancy that I looked upon her but as a relative."

"And can you bear to think," replied Mrs. Courtenaye, "on the misery you have inflicted on that young and innocent heart? She loves you simply, earnestly, unconsciously; her whole life is bound up in yours: she will die, Courtenaye—die of a broken heart."

"You press me too hardly," exclaimed her son; "there is one as young—and oh, how fair!—who has entrusted her destiny to my keeping. I have sought in vain the opportunity of telling you—of imploring your consent: I do now. I cannot marry my cousin, for I love another."

"Oh, Norbourne! oh, my own beloved child!" exclaimed Mrs. Courtenaye, wringing her hands with a passionate gesture of entreaty,—"have you no love for me? This affection is of but a few months' growth: will you weigh it against that which has cherished you for years? My son, have pity upon your mother! I will never consent to your marrying any but your cousin—for my sake consent."

"My dearest mother," cried Norbourne, "is it possible that worldly advantages can so far blind your judgment? Do you know what it is to love—to feel how unutterably dear the presence of another can be—to know that all life could offer were valueless without her—to hope, to fear, to think, only for her beloved sake?"

"Hush, hush!" said his mother; "this is a boy's vain passion: will you weigh it against your mother's love? Norbourne, few mothers have ever loved a child as I have loved you. You have been my all—my world: night after night I have watched your sleep; your little head was never cradled near any heart but my own—ay, and more, for your sake I have sinned against myself. I know the falsehood of the faith in which you have been brought up, yet never have I sought to divert you from it: it led to power and honour in your native land. On my head, I said, let the sin rest. These walls could tell how the penance of midnight has expiated my fault. Choose, Norbourne, between your mistress and your mother—between my blessing and my curse."

Norbourne was less affected by this passionate appeal than might be supposed. He was the most struck by what appeared his mother's extreme unreasonableness. She had not brought forward one rational objection, nor one argument beyond his interest. It appeared to him that she had allowed her imagina-

tion to gain an undue sway from the solitude in which she had lived. The idea of a marriage between himself and his cousin had been dwelt upon till it reigned paramount, and she could not even comprehend that there was another side to the question.

Impressed with this belief, he rose; and said to his mother, in a kind, but determined tone, "I will not now prolong an interview which so agitates you. Think over the subject, my dearest mother; and, after I have spoken to my uncle, I will return."

"Speak to your uncle! Stop!" exclaimed Mrs. Courtenaye, grasping his arm with a convulsive force, of which her thin white fingers did not seem capable; while her fine features were convulsed by some strong, though still suppressed emotion: "rash boy, you rush upon your fate! You shall not—must not leave this room to meet your uncle, unless it be to tell him that you marry his daughter."

"Mother," said Norbourne, startled by her manner, "I will not, indeed, leave the room till you tell me the meaning of all this. My uncle has no right to influence my actions: I am independent of him."

"No, no, you are not independent of him; every thing you have," interrupted Mrs. Courtenaye, "hangs upon his will. Come hither to the window, boy,"—and she drew him after her with the unnatural strength of a moment's excitement: "look there!"

Norbourne mechanically gazed from the casement; and nature, so strong in her loveliness, for an instant caught his attention. The golden light that bathed the richly-coloured woods, and warmed the purple distance of the hills, was in strong contrast to the cold and gloomy chamber in which he stood: but such tranquil beauty has no influence on an hour of strong emotion; and he turned away, to question of his mother's face.

"Look from the window," said she, in a hoarse whisper; "do you see the turrets of our old house fling their shadows on the grass below? Do you see the fields and woods around? They now call you master. I tell you, that one word of your uncle's, and they are gone from you for ever. If you do not marry his daughter, he speaks that word."

Norbourne heard her words: he made no answer, for at first he doubted that he had heard aright. Then a terrible fear of his mother's sanity crossed his mind; but there was that in her face which allowed no question of her intellect.

"I know not," at last he exclaimed, "what strange mystery

thus gives my birthright over to another; but this I know, though it be in his power to alienate from me every rood of that which is my rightful inheritance, I will not wed his daughter. Two things are yet left me—my honour and my name."

Mrs. Courtenaye's hand yet rested on that of her son; he felt the cold shudder which passed through her, and he saw the drops stand on her high white brow.

"Not even that!" said she; and he started at the faint hollowness of her voice. "Refuse to wed Constance, and you are with neither house, nor land, nor name!"

"What do you mean, madam?" exclaimed he, in a tone as strange and altered as her own; "am I not the son of the late Mr. Courtenaye—am I not your son?"

Both stood silent, each with a fixed and fascinated gaze on the other: she, with a face worn with a sorrow borne for many years—wan, emaciated, and on whose still fine features suffering wrought like physical pain; he, with all the hope and bloom of youth smitten by a sudden blow—pale as death, and yet with lip and brow curved as if they defied the very agony that wrung the blood from the heart.

"Am I," asked the youth, slowly, but with a voice so changed that it came unfamiliar to the ear even of his mother,—"am I the son of Mr. Courtenaye?"

"You are," replied his mother—and she leaned against the wall for support; while the blood, that had curdled at her heart for years, rushed over face, throat, and hands, for a moment, and then left her even more deadly pale than before,—"but I was not his wife."

CHAPTER XV.

THE CONSENT.

> It is the past that maketh my despair;
> The dark, the sad, the irrevocable past.
> Alas! why should our lot in life be made,
> Before we know that life? Experience comes,
> But comes too late. If I could now recall
> All that I now regret, how different
> Would be my choice! at best a choice of ill;
> But better than my miserable past.
> Loathed, yet despised, why must I think of it?

THE bitterness of death was upon the unfortunate young

man: he stood gazing from the window, but seeing nothing. He felt stunned—mortification, sorrow, and anger, mingled together: the past was like a dream, and the future swam indistinctly before him. The first object that roused him was the sight of his mother, who still leaned against the wall for support, her stately figure bowed in an attitude of hopeless misery; and her pale hands hung down as if she had not the power to raise them even to dash away the few tears, the one or two drops, that overflowed her fixed and dilated eyes. Norbourne saw how worn and wan they were: he caught them in his; and, pressing them to his lips, exclaimed,—

"My poor mother! I ask not of the past: I know you have suffered—that you suffer far more than I do. To me you have ever been the kindest, the best, the dearest. Let my uncle do his worst, we will leave this together."

"You will marry Constance," exclaimed she, "and save us both from the misery of disclosure?"

Norbourne's brow darkened.

"It were dishonour in me to yield. I will not play the part of an impostor, whom my uncle must despise even while he screens. No; these estates are his right: let him take them; I will not buy them with his daughter's hand."

"Not for your own sake, but for mine," said Mrs. Courtenaye, "do I implore you to consent. My life and death are in your hands; for never would I survive the disgrace of a discovery."

"It is somewhat late to think of this," exclaimed Norbourne, bitterly. The word was repented as spoken: "My dearest mother, you urge me too far."

"Norbourne," said she earnestly, almost calmly, "listen to my story; and you will then find it is not even the harshest justice that you measure upon my ill-fated head."

She returned to her seat by the fire, and, pointing to a chair near, made one strong effort at self-control, and began as follows:

"I was but sixteen when I met your father; yet even then I had known sorrow. My parents had both died within my recollection, and left me to guardians, who, only intent on securing my fortune, used every means to induce me to follow a religious life. They forced me into a convent, whence your father rescued me; and that evening I was married to him—ay, married. A daughter of my noble house could not have stooped to a love unsanctified by duty. We were married according to the rites of my own faith,—a faith I still hold as sacred as it was once held in this recreant land.

"We had many dangers and difficulties to encounter; and it was months before we reached England in safety. Alas! you were born before that time; and, as I learned too late, our differing faiths made our marriage illegal. He was only my husband before his God and his honour. He should have thought of them before he disgraced the woman who never wronged him by a doubt, and the child whose very existence was his own. I learned the truth, but would never consent to a second marriage. It could not do you justice; and, for myself, I needed none. I stood acquitted by my own conscience. I had not transgressed the laws of God; and the laws of men, what were they?—founded on the party and the policy of the moment. None knew the secret but Mr. Courtenaye's brother, and till now he has held it inviolable. But I know Lord Norbourne well; he would sacrifice his life for the success of a favourite project. Tell me that you will marry Constance: save me from shame—from death!"

Norbourne stood silent and irresolute. Ethel and his mother rose confusedly together; but Mrs. Courtenaye could not bear the suspense. She sprang from her seat—she threw herself at her son's feet, and, resisting all his attempts to raise her, exclaimed, while she clasped his knees with passionate vehemence,—"Never, never will I rise till you promise to save me from all I most loathe and fear! Must I be made a by-word and a scorn? The days of my youth and beauty to be remembered only to tell how fair I was as Courtenaye's mistress! To become the subject of the pity I have so despised! Norbourne, you are your father's representative; you owe me some atonement: at your hands I ask the name and fame which your father risked in his selfish passion. The God whose shrine I deserted for earthly affection is terribly avenged. My husband deceived—my son deserts me; but you cannot, Norbourne, abandon to shame the mother who watched your cradle. It is my life I ask—I will not survive the disgrace!"

"Mother," said Norbourne, in a hoarse whisper, "tell Lord Norbourne from me, I will marry his daughter."

CHAPTER XVI.

A LONDON LIFE.

The poet's lovely faith creates
  The beauty he believes;
The light which on his footsteps waits,
  He from himself receives.

His lot may be a weary lot;
  His thrall a heavy thrall;
And cares and griefs the crowd know not,
  His heart may know them all:

But still he hath a mighty dower,
  The loveliness that throws
Over the common thought and hour
  The beauty of the rose.

EXISTENCE is full of strange contrasts. The wheel of life whirls round, and leaves us scarcely time to know where we are before we find ourselves in a totally different position. The material is always much the same,—pride, vanity, deceit, and selfishness; but it is worked up into very different shapes.

A few weeks ago, Walter Maynard was pensively dreaming away existence to the music of a woodland brook, or in the soft shadows of the falling leaves. He was enjoying the most delicious hour of a poet's life—that consciousness of power which indicates its possession; but a consciousness unembittered by the harsh realities of its after-struggles into actual life. In this one charmed hour is all that afterwards constitutes poetry: at once poetry and its prophecy, it is the Aurora of the mind,

"Fille de la jour,
Qui naquit avant son père."

But he had left the green wood, and the thousand inspirations of the wild flowers, and the shadows that flit athwart the drooping boughs, for scenes whose inspirations were thought, toil, and suffering. The clock of St. Mary had just tolled one, and the neighbourhood around was hushed in profound repose. Every window was darkened excepting one; and there a faint light burned steadily. Night after night it burned till it mingled with the chill white light of morning.

There has always been to me something inexpressibly touching in the single taper burning through the long and lonely hours of silence and sleep. It must mark some weary vigil; one, perhaps by the sick couch, where rests the pale face on which we dread every moment to look our last. How the very heart suspends its beating in the hushed stillness of the sick chamber! what a history of hopes, fears, and cares, are in its hours! How does love then feel its utter fondness and its helplessness! How is the more active business of the outward world forgotten in the deep interest of the hushed world in those darkened walls!—a look, a tone, a breath, is there of vital importance. With what tender care the cup is raised to the feverish lip; with what intense anxiety the colour is watched on the wasted cheek! How are the pulses counted on the thin hand, and sometimes in vain!

Again, that lonely taper, how often is it the companion and sign of studies for which the day is too short—studies that steal the gloss from the sunny hair, and the light from the over-taxed eye!

Walter Maynard is bending over a little table, while the rapid pen is slow in putting down the thoughts that crowd upon him. His cheek is flushed with eagerness, and the red lip is curved with triumph. It does not suit the scene around; but from that the mind of the young poet is far, far away. There was that desolate air about the chamber which is peculiar to an ill-furnished London room; cities need luxuries, were it only to conceal the actual. In the country, an open window lets in at once the fair face of heaven: the sunshine has its own cheerfulness; the green bough flings on the floor its pleasant shade; and the spirit sees, at a glance, the field and the hedge where the hawthorn is in bloom. Not so in a town: there smoke enters at the casement; and we look out upon the darkened wall, and the narrow street, where the very atmosphere is dull and coarse. Its gloomy influence is on all.

The room where Walter was seated writing was one that any, who had looked aside for a moment, must have known could only have belonged to a town. The floor was blackened, as were the unpapered walls. The curtains, thin and scanty, had long merged their original red into a dark brown. Ornaments there were none, for the crooked mirror could scarcely be called such: you started back at your own face, so grim was the shadow thrown over it, so rough was the complexion reflected. The dust had lain on its surface so long that it had become part

even of the glass. A fire burned in the grate; but it rather indicated its presence by smoke, which stole forth in occasional puffs, than by its warmth.

The air which the young student breathed was bitter with the vapour that had gradually gathered around him. His hands, small and delicate as a woman's, had long since assumed that dead white which marks extreme cold. Still he wrote on. He was too much engrossed in his own charmed employ not to be insensible for a time to all external influences: he might suffer afterwards, but now his mind was his kingdom. Ever and anon the cheek wore a deeper crimson, and the dark eyes filled with sudden fire, as he felt the idea clothe itself in words tangible to the many, as its bodiless presence had previously been to himself. Solitary, chilled, and weary, yet the young poet hung over his page, on which was life, energy, and beauty; and under such, or similar circumstances, have been written those pages to which the world owes so much. A history of how and where works of imagination have been produced, would be more extraordinary than even the works themselves. Walter Maynard is but a type of his class.

The life of the most successful writer has rarely been other than of toil and privation; and here I cannot but notice a singularly absurd "popular fancy," that genius and industry are incompatible. The one is inherent in the other. A mind so constituted has a restlessness in its powers, which forces them into activity. Take our most eminent writers, and how much actual labour must have been bestowed on their glorious offerings at the altar of their country, and their fame! What a godlike thing that fame is! Think what it is to be the solace of a thousand lonely hours—to cheer the weary moments of sickness, to fling a charm around even nature. How many are there to whom, in long after years, your name will come like a note of music, who will love and honour you, because you have awakened within them thoughts and feelings which stir the loftiest dreams and the sweetest pulses of their nature! The poet's life is one of want and suffering, and often of mortification—mortification, too, that comes terribly home; but far be it from me to say, that it has not its own exceeding great reward. It may be late in coming, but the claim on universal sympathy is at last allowed. The future, glorious and calm, brightens over the grave; and then for the present, the golden world of imagination is around it. Not an emotion of your own beating heart, but it is recorded in music.

Walter Maynard felt neither his poverty nor his seclusion. He was living in the old heroic time; the brave and the beautiful were at his side, while he gave them high words, fitting their high converse. On the heroine of his play he dwelt with the passionate fondness of a lover: there the real mingled with the ideal: could he write of love, and not think of Ethel Churchill? She was the Egeria of his heart, who taught him all the truth of tenderness. If there be poetry in this world, it is in the depths of an unrequited and an imaginative passion—pure, dreaming, sacred from all meaner cares and lower wishes; asking no return, but feeling that life were little to lavish on the beloved one. Often and often did Walter's dark eyes glisten as he poured his whole soul in some strain of tender eloquence, which he knew must touch the heart of woman. "She will read it;" that little phrase—what hope, what happiness, has it not given!

Walter had been spared some of the difficulties attendant on a young writer's first efforts in London, by the kindness of Sir Jasper Meredith, whose letter of introduction to his bookseller had been more efficacious than such things usually are. The fact was, he had written another, repeating his commendations, and saying that he would be responsible for any expenses incurred in bringing any early productions before the public. Of this fact Walter was in complete ignorance, and himself was astonished at his own good fortune, in having his pamphlet and poems so readily received. In the meantime, he shut himself in obscure lodgings, and pursued his labours with the industry that hope gives to a pursuit.

CHAPTER XVII.

ANOTHER LONDON LIFE.

A pretty, rainbow sort of life enough;
Filled up with vanities and gay caprice:
Such life is like the garden at Versailles,
Where all is artificial; and the stream
Is held in marble basins, or sent up
Amid the fretted air, in waterfalls;
Fantastic, sparkling; and the element,
The mighty element, a moment's toy;
And, like all toys, ephemeral.

PLEASURE lasts for ever, but enjoyment does not: the reason

is, that the one lies around, and perpetually renews itself; but the other lies within, and exhausts itself. Lady Marchmont was at the pleasantest stage of both. At first, all things are new, and most things delightful. Vanity, novelty, and excitement, at once the graces and fates of society, were all in attendance upon her, A few weeks made her a reigning toast; verses were written, and glasses broken, in her honour; and it was an undecided thing, whether the Duke of Wharton wore her chains, or those of Lady Wortley. One day would suffice to tell the history of many.

> "Where sleepless lovers just at twelve awake,"

she awakened also. Chocolate came in those fairy cups of Indian china, which made the delight of our grandmothers and whose value was such, that the poet satirist considered their loss to be the severest trial to a woman's feelings—*alias* her temper; while to be

> "Mistress of herself, though china fall,"

was held an achievement almost too great for feminine philosophy. Chocolate then enabled the languid beauty to go through the duties of her toilet. Notes were read, laces looked over, the last new verses looked over with them; perhaps a page read from the last French romance—the mind a little disturbed from its heroic sorrows by the consideration, whether the next set of new bodkins should be of silver or pearl. Then it was to be decided what ribands would suit the complexion; whether the gazer would have to exclaim,—

> "In her the beauties of the spring are seen,
> Her cheek is rosy, and her gown is green;"

or whether he would have to soar a yet higher flight, and cry,—

> "In her the glory of the heaven we view,
> Her eyes are starlike and her mantle blue."

Then the patches had to be placed—patches full of sentiment, coquetry, and bits of opinions as minute as themselves. Essences and powder had to be scattered together, and Henrietta's long black tresses gathered into a mass which might fairly set all the orders of architecture at defiance. Lastly came the hoop, and, with scarf and fan,

> "Conscious Beauty put on all her chams."

Friends began to drop in. One came with intelligence of a sale, where the most divine things in the world were to be had for nothing, or next to it—that *next to it*, by-the-by, is usually a very sufficient difference. Another came fresh from an Indian house, where silks and smiles, fans and flirtations Chinese monsters and lovers, made the most delightful confusion possible. Ah, those Indian warehouses made the morning pass in a charming manner! many a soft confession was whispered over a huge china jar; many a heart has succumbed to a suite of mother-of-pearl card-box and counters; and as to the shawls, why, the whole feminine world has long ago acknowledged them to be irresistible. To one or other of these Lady Marchmont was usually hurried away; occupied with bargains,

> "Bought, because they may be wanted—
> Wanted, because they may be had."

Then came the walk on the Mall, with as many cavaliers in her wake as there are bubbles in the track of the stately swan; each with sigh and compliment equally ready-made. Heavens, but the classic deities did see service in those days! Juno, Venus, and the Graces, do, certainly, round off a sentence; and the very common-place is redeemed by a fine world of olden poetry, that nothing can quite destroy.

There is an exquisite vein of flattery running through our ancient masters of song: when they wished to paint their mistress's charms, all nature was compelled into the sweet services. How fine is Dryden's

> "In the far land of pleasant Thessalie,
> Uprose the sun, and uprose Emily!"

How sweet Donne's parting prayer to her who would fain have companioned him, a gentle page,—

> "When I'm away, dream me some happiness;"

or the sea captain's petition to his unknown mistress,—

> "Tell me thy name, fair saint,
> That I may call upon it in a storm,
> And save some ship from perishing;"

or, to conclude with Carew's picturesque belief,

> "Ask me no more where June bestows,
> When spring is gone, the fading rose;

> For in her beauty's orient deep
> Those flowers, as in their causes sleep."

These days of romantic gallantry had somewhat waned: but enough of the high-toned and classic remained to make the charming things then said very charming indeed; and never were they poured in a fairer ear than in Lady Marchmont's; nor, it must be confessed, in one more ready to receive them.

Night came, with that increase of gayety which has always been night's peculiar privilege—perhaps on the principle of contrast. Monday, it was the ridotto; Tuesday, the opera; Wednesday, Ranelagh; Thursday, the play; Friday, a ball; Saturday, a rout, or else a little of all these blended together. What a sensation was produced the first night of her appearance in the stage-box! One line in the play was,

> "I look upon her face, and think of heaven;"

and how many white gloves at once addressed the line and their applause together to herself. No wonder that Lady Marchmont began to wonder whether paradise and London were not synonymous terms.

One morning, while

> "Watching the dumb devotion of her glass,"

in came Lady Mary Wortley Montague, who caught both her hands, and cried, laughing,—"Yield yourself my prisoner—rescue or no rescue!"

"Why," replied Henrietta, "the fashion of wearing your ladyship's chains is too universal for me to resist it."

"There is a good child! and now come and do as I bid you. We have improvised the most charming party imaginable. The summer has come back by surprise. I own I wonder that June was not tired of us; still here is a day so sunny, that October does not know its own. The Duke of Wharton, Lord Hervey, and some two or three others, have designed a water-party in our honour. We are to go and see Pope's new grotto, opened for the first time; then try Hampton Court, and see if Mrs. Howard will stake a little princely gold on a pool of basset."

Lady Marchmont was delighted; and a little time saw them

> "Sailing the bosom of the silver Thames."

—There were several besides, but a *partie quarrée* was formed at their end of the boat, by herself, Lady Mary, the duke, and Lord Hervey. The ladies were on their best looks, the gentlemen on their best manners; and manner in the one sex is equivalent to look in the other. The two fair dames were sufficiently jealous of the glory of conquest; and the two cavaliers sufficiently undecided, to give a due degree of piquancy to exertion; and it must be allowed that each was worth the trouble of pleasing.

Lady Mary was in the zenith of her beauty; and, as it was a beauty that had always rested on feature and expression, the first bloom was scarcely missed. She caught the attention at once, but she was more likely to attract than to fix. The bright dark eyes were restless, and the lip had smiles more sarcastic than sweet: and there was a pretty defiance in her air, which piqued rather than interested. Her dress was picturesque, but careless, and would not have suited any one but herself; and her manners were in exact keeping with her face and costume;—they were at once indifferent and flattering: she exacted much attention, but she also bestowed much; and there was a brilliant uncertainty in her conversation, which gave it a peculiar charm. None could tell whether the next sentence was to be a compliment or an epigram. She talked much, and enjoyed talking; and, obviously, did not dislike a little *tracasserie*. Scandal, with her, did not lose any of its usual snowball propensities, of gathering as it went.

Next her sat the Duke of Wharton, in an attitude ingeniously indolent. He had that air, so English, and yet so impossible to define—high-bred. To-day his toilet was simple to affectation: he had resolved, he said, not to have a care in the world, and he began by dismissing the most important. His figure was good, but slight; and with singular grace in all its movements. His finely cut features were capable of every variety of expression; they were, to use a French epithet, expressive as their epithets for all social qualities usually are, *mobile* in the extreme. They needed the passing animation of the moment; for, when in a state of repose, there was something wanting. The face did not interest; you noted in it a certain contraction of forehead, and an indecision about the mouth, which indicated, surely enough, Wharton's character. It was like a fairy tale, in which the good fairies assemble round the infant's cradle, and lavish upon it all the choicest gifts. Suddenly, some old and malicious magician appears,

and destroys the effect of all these fine qualities by some one evil addition.

The curse to Philip Wharton was the same that Jacob pronounced over Reuben on his death bed: "Unstable as water, thou shalt not excel." To-day he was

> "Captive in Cytherea's bower,
> To Beauty and her train;"

to-morrow engaged in some dark intrigue, whose intricacy was its chief charm: and still, whether as lover or politician, diverted from his first aim by some other object.

> "Thus, on the sands of Afric's burning plains,
> Though deeply made, no long impress remains.
> The slightest leaf can leave its figure there,
> The strongest form is scattered by the air."

What the Duke of Wharton wanted was passion—passion, which alone gives intensity to the purpose, and constancy to the pursuit. He knew no feeling stronger than excitement, and looked for nothing beyond amusement. His friends could not rely upon him, but his foes could; they might be sure that his resentment would, like all his undertakings, only go half way.

On the other side was Lord Hervey, a slight, fair young man, dressed—oh, ye gods!—invention enough for an epic must have gone to complete that toilet! It involved the peace of mind of "a whole sex of queens;" it was too destructive, and such Lord Hervey felt himself to be: his voice to a woman took a tone of tender pity, as if he compassionated his conquests. He never talked about any thing but himself; because he was persuaded that, in so doing, he chose the most attractive subject to his listeners. His horse, his dog, his every thing that was his, had a peculiar charm, from the mere fact of belonging to him. He was clever, and yet did the most absurd things, only because he believed that *his* doing them redeemed the absurdity.

It was a lovely day; for, say what they will, England does see the sunshine sometimes. Indeed, I think that our climate is an injured angel: has it not the charm of change, and what charm can be greater? That morning the change was a deep blue sky, with a few large clouds floating over it; a sun which turned the distant horizon into a golden haze; and a soft west wind, that seemed only sent to bring the sound of the French

Lerns in the boat that followed their own. As they passed along Chelsea Reach, the bells of the church were ringing merrily.

"Why, that is a wedding peal!" cried the Duke of Wharton; "and it puts me in mind that Miss Pelham and Sir John Shelley are just going to enter into the holy and blessed state."

"Yes," replied Lady Mary, "and I never knew a marriage with a greater prospect of happiness—she will be a widow in six weeks!"

"Well," said Lady Marchmont, "you carry your connubial theory even further than in your last ballad:—

'My power is pass'd by like a dream,
And I have discover'd too late,
That whatever a lover may seem,
A husband is what we must hate.'"

Lady Mary smiled very graciously; she almost forgave Henrietta for looking so well: to have one's own verses learned by heart, and gracefully quoted, is more than poetical nature can resist.

"For my part," continued the Duke of Wharton, "I hold that the connubial system of this country is a complete mistake. The only happy marriages I ever heard of are those in some Eastern story I once read, where the king marries a new wife every night, and cuts off her head in the morning."

"It would suit your grace, at all events," replied Lady Mary; "you who are famed for being to one thing constant never."

"Well," exclaimed Lord Hervey, who had appeared to be absorbed in watching his own shadow on the water, "I do not think it is such a dreadful thing to be married. It is a protection, at all events."

"'Thou, who so many favours hast received,
Wondrous to tell, and hard to be believed!'"

cried Lady Mary: "and so, like the culprits of old, you are forced to take refuge from your pursuers at the altar."

"For pity's sake," ejaculated the duke, "do let us talk of some less disagreeable subject."

"Fie, your grace!" exclaimed Lady Mary. "Disagreeable subject! Lord Hervey was only, as usual, talking of himself."

The whole party were silent for some minutes. After all, wit is something like sunshine in a frost—very sharp, very

bright, but very cold and uncomfortable. The silence was broken by Lady Marchmont exclaiming,—"How fine the old trees are! there is something in the deep shadow that they fling upon the water that reminds me of home."

"I am not sure," answered the duke, "that I like to be reminded of any thing. Let me exist intensely in the present—the past and future should be omitted from my life by express desire."

"What an insipid existence!" replied Henrietta,—"no hopes, and no fears."

"Ah! forgive me," whispered Wharton, "if the present moment appear to me a world in itself."

"I," said Lord Hervey, "do not dislike past, present, nor future. Like woman, they have all behaved very well to me. The past has given me a great deal of pleasure; the present is with you; and as to the future, such is the force of example, that I doubt not it will do by me as its predecessors have done."

"Truly," cried Lady Mary, "the last new comedy that I saw in Paris must have modelled its hero from you: let me recommend you to adopt two of its lines as your motto:—

> 'J'ai l'esprit parfait—du moins je le crois;
> Et je rends grace au Dieu de m'avoir créé—moi!'"

"It is very flattering to be so appreciated," answered Lord Hervey, with the most perfect nonchalance.

"What an affecting thing," said Lady Mary, "was the death of Lord Carleton! He died as he lived, holding one hand of the fair Duchess of Queensberry; who, with the other was feeding him with chicken. What an example he gave to his sex! he was equally liberal with his diamonds and his affections."

"*L'un vaut bien l'autre*," said Lady Marchmont.

"I shall set off for Golconda to-morrow," cried Wharton.

"Don't!" interrupted Lady Mary; "it would be too mortifying, when you came back, to find how little we had missed you."

"Oh, you would miss me," returned he, laughing, "precisely because you ought not. I hope that you have heard the proposed alteration in the commandments at the last political meeting at Houghton? Hanbury suggested that the 'not' should, in future, be omitted; but Doddington objected, as people might leave off doing wrong if it became a duty. At all events, they would not steal, covet, and bear false witness against their neighbour, with half the relish that they do at present."

"Ah," replied Lady Mary, "we make laws, and we follow customs. By the first we cut off our own pleasures; and by the second, make ourselves answerable for the follies of others."

"Well, Lady Mary," replied Wharton, "we have now arrived where you, and you only, give the laws—yonder is our poet's residence."

The boat drew to the side, and the gay party stepped upon the bank.

CHAPTER XVIII.

POPE'S VILLA.

I say not, regret me; you will not regret;
You will try to forget me, you cannot forget;
We shall hear of each other, ah, misery to hear
Those names from another which once were so dear!

But deep words shall sting thee that breathe of the past,
And many things bring thee thoughts fated to last:
The fond hopes that centred in thee are all dead,
The iron has entered the soul where they fed.

Of the chain that once bound me, the memory is mine,
But my words are around thee, their power is on thine;
No hope, no repentance, my weakness is o'er,
It died with the sentence—I love thee no more!

It was a very bit of Arcadia, the scene that the lawn presented. A few late flowers lingered among the shrubs, and the rich colouring on the autumnal foliage supplied the place of bloom. The garden was laid out with exquisite taste, and the groups scattered around seemed animated with the spirit of the place; for they placed themselves in little knots, just where they were calculated to produce the best effect. There was an elegant collation ready; and, while Pope talked of

"His humble roof, and poet's fare,"

he had neglected nothing that could please his assembled guests. To Lady Marchmont he was the most interesting object of all, though all his *petits soins* were addressed to Lady Mary Wortley Montague, who received them with that encouraging coquetry born of flattered vanity.

Flattery is like champagne, it soon gets into the head; but

in Pope's flattery there was too much of the heart. Long after hours of neglect and mortification dearly atoned for that morning's pleasant delusion. There is something in genius for which Fate demands severe atonement. In some things Pope's was an exception to the general lot. He dwelt in that "lettered ease" to which his own taste gave refinement; his talents pined in no long obscurity, but early reached their just appreciation; his friends were those whose friendship is honour, and he lived in a very court of personal homage and flattery. But fortune only neglected to do what nature had already done. Dwarfed from his birth, that slender frame was tenanted by acute physical ills; which, acting upon a mind even more sensitive than his body, made life one long scene of irritation and suffering. The fingers were contracted by pain that yet gave the sweetest music to their page: satire was at once his power (and the sense of power is sweet to us all) and his refuge.

The passion and melancholy of one or two poems just suffice to show what a world of affection and sentiment was checked and subdued, because their indulgence had been only too painful; but to-day was to be as flowing as his own verses: he was at her side on whom he lavished so much passionate and graceful flattery; and Lady Mary paid him back,—not in kind, for his heart went with his words, but hers was "only sweet lip-service."

There is a cruelty in feminine coquetry, which is one of nature's contradictions. Formed of the softest materials—of the gentle smile and the soothing word, yet nothing can exceed its utter hard-heartedness. Its element is vanity, of the coldest, harshest, and most selfish order: it sacrifices all sense of right, all kindly feelings, all pity, for the sake of a transient triumph. Lady Mary knew—for when has woman not known?—her power. She knew that she was wholly beloved by a heart, proud, sensitive, and desponding. She herself had warmed fear into hope—had made passion seem possible to one who felt, keenly felt, how much nature had set him apart. If genius for one moment believed that it could create love, as it could create all else, hers was the fault; she nursed the delusion: it was a worthy tribute to her self-love.

"Truly, her ladyship," said the Duke of Wharton, "parades Parnassus a little too much. Does she suppose nobody is to be flattered but herself? Come, Hervey, let as try a little wholesome neglect." Forthwith they devoted themselves exclusively to Lady Marchmont. Lady Mary's smiles were unmarked and her witticisms fell dead-weights so far as they

were concerned. This was too much for a wit and a beauty to endure. Of what avail was flattery that she only heard herself? She grew impatient till the collation was over, and was the first to step out upon the lawn.

Pope did the honours of his garden, which was a poem in itself. He showed them his favourite willow—fittest tree for such a soil—so pale and tender in its green, so delicate a lining within the leaves, so fragile and so drooping, with so mournful a murmur when the wind stirs its slender branches. The whole scene was marked by that air of refined and tranquil beauty which is the charm of an English landscape. The fields had that glossy green, both refreshing and cheerful; the slight ascents were clothed with trees—some retaining their verdure, others wearing those warm and passionate colours that, like all things coloured by passion, so soon exhaust themselves. Yet what a gorgeous splendour is on an autumnal landscape! The horse-chestnut, with its rich mixture of orange and brown—the sycamore, with its warrior scarlet—the coral red of the small leaves of the hawthorn, mixed together with an oriental pomp; as if the year died like the Assyrian monarch, on a pyre of all precious things. Winding its way in broken silver, the sunshine dancing on every ripple, the Thames lay at the edge of the grassy sweep. The blue sky, with the light clouds floating on its surface, was mirrored in the depths of the river; but as if it lost somewhat of its high tranquillity under the influence of our sphere, the reflection was agitated and tremulous, while the reality was calm and still. It is but the type of our restless world, and the serene one to which we aspire: we look up, and the heavens are above, holy and tranquil; we look down on their mirror below, and they are varying and troubled. But few flowers and those pale and faint, lingered in the garden: these Pope gathered and offered to his fair guests. Lady Marchmont placed hers carefully in her girdle. "I shall keep even the withered leaves as a relic," said she, with a smile even more flattering than her words. It was well that she engrossed the attention of her host from the dialogue going on between Lord Hervey and Lady Mary.

"You learned the language of flowers in the East," said he; "but I thought dwarfs were only the messengers."

"And such they are now," replied his listener: "here is one flower for you,

'The rest the gods dispersed in empty air,'"

and she flung the blossoms carelessly from her.

Pope did not see the action, for he was pointing out a beautiful break in the view. "I have," said he, "long had a favourite project—that of planting an old Gothic cathedral in trees. Tall poplars, with their white stems, the lower branches cut away, would serve for the pillars; while different heights would form the aisles. The thick green boughs would shed 'a dim religious light,' and some stately old tree would have a fine effect as the tower."

"A charming idea!" cried Wharton; "and we all know

'That sweet saint whose name the shrine would bear.'

But, while we are waiting for the temple, can you not show us the altar?—we want to see your grotto."

Pope desired nothing better than to show his new toy, and led the way to the pretty and fanciful cave, which was but just finished. It was duly admired; but, while looking around, Wharton observed some verses lying on the seat.

"A treasure for the public good," exclaimed he; "I volunteer reading them aloud."

"Nay, nay, that is very unfair," cried Pope, who, nevertheless, did not secretly dislike the proposal.

"Oh," replied the duke, "we will allow for your modesty's 'sweet, reluctant, amorous delay;' but read them I must and shall." Then, turning towards Lady Mary, he read the following lines:—

"Ah, friend, 'tis true—this truth you lovers know,
In vain my structures rise, my gardens grow;
In vain fair Thames reflects the double scene
Of hanging woodlands, and of sloping green:
Joy lives not here; to happier seats it flies,
And only lives where Wortley casts her eyes."

"Pray, 'fair inspirer of the tender strains,' let me lay the offering at your feet."

"Under them, if you please," said she, her fine features expressing the most utter contempt; and, trampling the luckless compliment in the dust, she took Lord Hervey's hand, and, exclaiming,—"The atmosphere of this place is too oppressive for me," left the grotto: but part of her whisper to her companion was meant to be audible,—

"A sign-post likeness of the human race,
That is at once resemblance and disgrace."

CHAPTER XIX.

Alas, how bitter are the wrongs of love
Life has no other sorrow so acute:
For love is made of every fine emotion,
Of generous impulses, and noble thoughts;
It looketh to the stars, and dreams of Heaven;
It nestles 'mid the flowers, and sweetens earth.
Love is aspiring, yet is humble, too:
It doth exalt another o'er itself,
With sweet heart-homage, which delights to raise
That which it worships; yet is fain to win
The idol to its lone and lowly home
Of deep affection. 'Tis an utter wreck
When such hopes perish. From that moment, life
Has in its depths a well of bitterness,
For which there is no healing.

Lady Marchmont was left alone in the grotto with its ill-fated master, and every kindly feeling in her nature was in arms. Affecting not to have noticed what passed, she approached where Pope stood,—speechless, pale with anger, and a yet deeper emotion: she said in a voice whose usual sweetness was sweeter than ever, with its soothing and conciliating tone,—"There is one part of your garden, Mr. Pope, which I must entreat you to show me. I have a dear, kind old uncle at home, who owes you many a delightful evening. He will never forgive me unless I write him word that I have seen

'The grapes long lingering on the sunny wall.'"

Pope took her hand mechanically, and led her forth; but the effort at self-control was too much for his weak frame. The drops stood on that pale high brow which was the poetry of his face, and he leant against the railing. "No!" exclaimed he, passionately, after a few minutes' silence, "your courtesy, lady, cannot disguise from me that you, too, heard the insult of that heartless woman. Let me speak—I know I may trust your kindness; and, even if you turned into after ridicule the bitter outpouring of this moment's misery, you would but do as others, in whom I trusted, have done. My God! how madly I have loved her—madly indeed, since it made me forget the gulf that nature has set between us—she so beautiful, and I, as she has just said, who only resemble my kind to disgrace it! Yet she sought me first, she led me on, she taught me to think that the utter prostration of the heart was something in her eyes—

that a mind like hers could appreciate mind. Fool, fool, that I have been! What have I done, that I should be thus set apart from my kind,—disfigured, disgraced, immeasurably wretched? Oh! that I might lay my weary head on my mother earth, and die!"

"We could not spare you," exclaimed Lady Marchmont, taking his hand affectionately,—the tears starting in her eyes; "but not for this moment's mortification must you forget your other friends—how much even strangers love and admire you. Think of your own glorious genius, and on the happiness which it bestows. I have but one relative in the world: he is an old solitary man; and I think of him with cheerfulness, whenever I send him a new page of yours. I speak but as one of many who never name you but with admiration and with gratitude."

Pope pressed the hand that yet remained in his own. "God bless you, my dear, kind child! I thank you for calling my power to my mind. She shall learn that the worm on which she trod has a sting."

They loitered a little while, till the irritated host was equal to joining his guests. The boat was ready; and the whole party joined in laughing at Lady Marchmont for her long *tête-à-tête* with Pope.

"I am not jealous," cried Lady Mary:

> "'Ye meaner beauties, I permit ye shine—
> Go triumph in a heart that once was mine!'"

"I think," said Lady Marchmont, pointedly, "there has been as little heart in the matter as possible; but you shall none of you laugh me out of my cordial admiration of a man of first-rate genius, and whose personal infirmities call upon us for the kindliest sympathy."

"By Jove! you are right," cried the Duke of Wharton: "how much vanity may be pardoned in one who has such cause for just pride! He is building up a noble monument in his language, which will last when we, with our small hopes and influences, are as much forgotten as if we had never been."

"I see no great good in being remembered," retorted Lady Mary: "I would fain concentrate existence in the present. I would forget in order to enjoy. As to memory, it only reminds me that I am growing older every day; and as to hope, it only puts one out of conceit with possession."

"All this is very true of our commonplace existence," replied Lady Marchmont; "but the gifted mind has a diviner element."

"'How charming is divine philosophy—
Not harsh and rugged, as dull fools believe,'"

exclaimed Lord Hervey, with a sneer.

"With the single exception of Lady Marchmont," said Wharton, "we have all behaved shamefully to-day. How I will admire the next thing that Pope writes! and, what is more, I will ride over to Twickenham to tell him so;" and, having made this compromise with his conscience, the conversation dropped.

From that day, however, all friendship was at an end between Lady Mary and Pope. How he revenged himself is well known. His lines yet remain, stamped with all the bitterness of wounded vanity and mortified affection. Strange, the process by which love turns into hate. I pity it even more than I blame it. What unutterable wretchedness must the heart have undergone! what scorn and what sorrow must have been endured before revenge could become a refuge and a resource!

CHAPTER XX.

THE MARRIAGE MORNING.

My heart is filled with bitter thought,
My eyes would fain shed tears;
I have been thinking upon past,
And upon future years.

Years past—why should I stir the depths
Beneath their troubled stream?
And years that are as yet to come,
Of them I dread to dream.

Yet wherefore pause upon our way?
'Tis best to hurry on;
For half the dangers that we fear,
We face them, and they're gone.

The morning came when Norbourne Courtenaye was to marry his cousin. He and his mother had arrived at Norbourne Park the evening before, as it had been settled that the ceremony was to be performed in the little chapel Lord Norbourne had himself built. At one time he had spent large sums of money on the house, but that was when he had hoped for a son; of late years he obviously directed his views in another channel. He

had pulled down a great part of the building, while he increased his landed property to a vast extent; but all his purchases were adjacent to the Courtenaye property, which, when united with his own, would make one of the finest estates in England. He had long gone back upon the ancient honours of his house, instead of his once hope to be the founder of another line.

In the little, as in the great things of life, are to be found the type and the sign of our immortality. Every hope that looks forward is pledge of the hereafter to which it refers. Who rests content with the present? None. We have all deep within us a craving for the future. In childhood we anticipate youth; in youth manhood; in manhood old age; and to what does that turn, but to a world beyond our own? From the very first, the strong belief is nursed within us; we look forward and forward, till that which was desire grows faith. The to come is the universal heritage of mankind; and he claims but a small part of his portion who looks not beyond the grave.

The house was alive with bridal preparations—still there was but little mirth. Lord Norbourne had, as well as Mrs. Courtenaye, impressed his character on his household. His lordship's was quiet, obedient, and perfect in all mechanical arrangement; the lady's was staid, slow, and solemn. Merriment appeared a sort of excess to either, at least while in the atmosphere of either master or mistress. The day itself was miserably dull; a thick fog shut out the landscape, while a few of the nearer trees alone were visible, spreading out their thin spectral arms on the murky air. Over head, the sky was of that dull leaden hue to whose monotony even a dark cloud would be a relief. It was as if the most smoke-like of earth's vapours had obscured the fair face of heaven.

It was curious to look within each chamber, and mark the different employ of the principal individuals. Lord Norbourne was seated by a blazing fire, while the whole dressing-room was fragrant with the coffee which had just been brought to him. Mechanically, he was turning over a paper, and opening letters; but his thoughts were not with his employ. He looked more anxious than he often allowed himself to look; but then, to be sure, there was no one near to observe it. Suddenly, his glance fell on a casket near; he opened it, and the fire's light shone reflected from its glittering contents.

"Ay," said he, aloud, "these toys make the destiny of woman; and I doubt whether, after all, our own be not equally worthless. Is there any thing worth the exertion of procuring it? Thank God, we grow accustomed to our daily yoke; and it

is habit, and habit only, that enables us to get through life. Would that I could put my head, for a few hours, on Norbourne's shoulders. 'If young people would but consider,' says a moral essay that I have somewhere read: it would be putting the thing much more rationally, to say, if young people would but let us consider for them, and be satisfied. Youth would be a delightful time, if it were not so singularly absurd; and if the consequences of its vain hopes, and foolish beliefs, did not remain long after themselves had passed away. I, for one, have no wish to live my youth over again;" and the speaker sank back in a gloomy revery.

Lord Norbourne was a very handsome man, and young-looking for his time of life. It was as if the moral energy which was the great characteristic of his mind exercised its strong control even over time, and forbade it to leave traces of internal struggle on that smooth and polished brow. But to-day the shadow of long-past years rested upon it; and in the dejected attitude, the melancholy expression, few would have recognised the bland and stately bearing which generally defied scrutiny in Lord Norbourne. Suddenly, he started from his seat.

"Folly!" exclaimed he, "to waste my time in these miserable recollections! I have decided that Norbourne shall marry Constance. It is life to her, and every thing that makes life worth having to him. Wealth, rank, and power—these may surely weigh in the scale against a boy's fancy;" but the speaker's countenance again darkened, and he was silent. "This is worse than foolish," said he, in a low and determined tone: "of all follies that we can commit, the greatest is to hesitate."

So saying, he took up the case of jewels; and, with his usual smile, and quiet step, sought his daughter's chamber.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE TOILET.

Bring from the east, bring from the west,
Flowers for the hair, gems for the vest;
Bring the rich silks that are shining with gold,
Wrought in rich broidery on every fold.

Bring ye the perfumes that breathe on the rose,
Such as the summer of Egypt bestows,
Bring the white pearls from the depths of the sea—
They are fair like the neck where the lustre will be.

> Such are the offerings that now will be brought,
> But can they bring peace to the turmoil of thought?
> Can they one moment of quiet bestow
> To the human heart, feverish and beating, below?

The next chamber was that of Mrs. Courtenaye. For the first time since her husband's death, she had thrown off her weeds, and put on attire more suited to the occasion. She was richly, yet plainly dressed, in a purple velvet, with a hood of white point lace. Even her silent handmaids were surprised out of their ordinary propriety by her appearance. She waved away, with an impatient gesture of her hand, the mirror that they brought; and, saying she wished to be alone, flung herself on a seat.

"I know not," exclaimed she, "why I should feel this depression and regret. Does not this marriage ensure Norbourne all that life can desire—wealth, rank and security? I wedded, as I thought, for love, faith, and happiness; and what was the end? Years of bitter fear and doubt. Dishonour has stood for ever, a spectre, viewless, but dreaded, at my side. That ghost is now laid for ever; why, then, am I sad?"

Her own heart told her why. Years had passed since, with a burning cheek and a beating heart she had knelt by the side of Norbourne's father, and arisen from before the priest and the crucifix, his bride. She thought what a world of sweet emotion sent the light to her eyes, and the colour to her blush, as they wandered together beneath the silvery shadows of the olive grove. How minutely was the slightest thing impressed on her memory! She remembered the childish sorrow with which she saw the thicker boughs shut out the sunshine, because she no longer could watch his shadow. She thought, too, how they leant beside the old Moorish well, whose deep water was like a dark and polished mirror—leant gazing each on the image of the other, and then laughed aloud in tender mockery, to think that they should gaze on a shadow with the reality so near; and they looked into each other's eyes with a deeper fondness. With what sweet confidence did they talk of the future; what a loveliness, never noted before, was on the blue sky and the fair earth!

It was the loveliness of love, flinging his own divine likeness over all; and this love, the only spiritual and mighty happiness of which humanity is capable, was henceforth to be to Norbourne a forbidden word. He loved one, and was to wed another. Earth has no such misery. It is wretchedness to pine through

long years of uncertain absence, subject to all the casualties of doubt and distance, feeding on long expectation; till, as the Scripture so touchingly says, hope deferred is sickness to the heart: still there is hope, and love has a store of subtle happiness in the many links that memory delights to bind, and whose tender recallings are the dearest guarantee for the future.

It is wretchedness to kneel by the grave of the departed, who have taken with them the verdure from the earth, and the glory from the sky; who have left home and heart alike desolate: but then the soul asserts its diviner portion, looks afar off through the valley of the shadow of tears, and is intensely conscious that here is but its trial, and beyond is its triumph. The love that dwells with the dead has a sanctity in its sorrow; for love, above all things, asserts that we are immortal. But wretchedness takes no form, varied as are its many modes in this our weary existence, like that where the hand is given, and the heart is far away—where the love vowed at the altar is not that which lies crushed, yet not quenched, within the hidden soul. Hope brings no comfort; for there were cruelty and crime in its promises: memory has no solace; it can, at best only crave oblivion—and oblivion of what? Of all life's sweet dreams, and deepest feelings. Yet, what slight things must, with a sting like that of the adder, bring back the past—too dear, and yet too bitter! a word, a look, a tone, may be enough to wring every pulse with the agony of a vain and forbidden regret.

Mrs. Courtenaye felt that her son needed consolation; and she hurried to his chamber, and had opened the door before she recollected that she could say—nothing. He was already dressed, and alone. He was leaning against the fire-place, and so lost in thought that he did not hear his mother enter.

"My own dear child!" said she, laying her hand on his. He started—his cheek grew deadly pale: it was for a moment, and his part was taken.

"Ah! you were afraid I should not have finished my toilet," exclaimed he, with a forced smile; "but do let me admire the result of yours. Why, my dear mother, I did not know how beautiful you were!" and he gazed with a natural touch of pride on the noble face and stately figure, to which time, while it stole freshness, had given dignity.

The tears, in despite of her efforts, swam in her eyes. He would not seem to see them; but, taking her hand, kissed it fervently as he led her forth. Deep and bitter is the grief that shrinks from words, even with those the most loved and trust-

ed; and what a world of unspoken sorrow was in the soul of both mother and son as they crossed the threshold!

CHAPTER XXII.

THE JEWELS GIVEN.

A gentle creature was that girl,
Meek, humble, and subdued;
Like some lone flower that has grown up
In woodland solitude.

Its soil has had but little care,
Its growth but little praise;
And down it droops the timid head
It has not strength to raise.

For other brighter blooms are round,
And they attract the eye;
They seem the sunny favourites
Of summer, earth, and sky.

The human and the woodland flower
Hath yet a dearer part,—
The perfume of the hidden depths,
The sweetness at the heart.

"You must wear these to-day, my dear child," said Lord Norbourne, as, entering the dressing-room of his daughter, he laid a suit of pearls on her table.

Constance looked up in her father's face, tearfully: there was something in his voice so kind, so subdued, so different from its ordinary careless and sarcastic tone; and the expression on his features was equally unusual. Touched and encouraged for the first time in her life, she flung herself unbidden, into her father's arms, and he held her tenderly to his heart.

"Are you happy, my child?" asked he, in a low broken whisper.

"Happy! my dearest father," exclaimed she, hiding her face on his arm, where she still hung, till he could only see the back of her neck, and even that was rosy with one deep blush—"unutterably happy! Even to myself I never dared own, till now, how much I loved my cousin. When others taunted me with

faults which, God knows, I felt but too bitterly, Norbourne always took my part. From him I never heard an unkind word. I have often cried myself to sleep in his arms. As I grew older, I loved him but the more, because such love seemed hopeless. I never dreamed that one so beautiful, so gifted, could waste a thought on myself. But it was happiness to hope that he might be happy, to think of him, to pray for him. And now to know that he loves me (for he would not marry me without,) makes me feel as if I were in a dream, whose only fear is to awake. And you, my dearest father, how kind you are to me! Can you forgive me if I tell you that there was a time when I thought you did not care for me, because I was not fair as my sisters? It made me feel so lonely, so sad; and I clung yet more to my love for my cousin: no one cared for my affection; it was, therefore, my own to do with as I would. But his love scarcely fills me with a deeper joy than does yours. Oh, my father! if I have ever given you cause for pain, if I have ever angered you, forgive me now: tell me that, in future years, when weary of the hurried life that you now lead, my care, my affection, will be a comfort to you; tell me, my own dearest father, that you love me!"

While speaking, Constance had raised her head, and gazed eagerly on her father; her cheek was warm, with colour more lovely from its extreme delicacy; her eyes lighted up with the eloquence of excited emotion; and every feature was animated with the impassioned and beautiful feelings of the moment. She looked lovely; and Lord Norbourne, for an instant, forgot the under current of self-reproach, which, though he would not have owned, yet made itself only too forcibly felt within.

"Do I love you?" said he, in answer to her touching appeal: "deeply and dearly, my last, my only child. I have, Heaven knows, nothing to pardon in one who has always been so patient, so sweet, and so good. No, my dearest and gentlest, it is you who must forgive, if, taken up with the cares of the world, in projects that looked only to the future, I have forgotten the womanly tenderness due to an orphan girl; yet you are, you have been, very dear to me, my own sweet Constance."

His voice faltered; for affections, undisturbed for years, swelled within him. Every kindly and warm emotion was awakened, and, for the first time, he felt remorse: he almost trembled to think how completely his daughter was deceived, while he also felt that her happiness could not be dearly purchased. And yet, Norbourne—was he not his victim, and

made such by all that was most generous in his nature? Had he stood alone, his uncle was perfectly aware that no wealth, no rank, nc worldly advantage, would have moved him; but his mother had been the tie, and Lord Norbourne started to think how mercilessly he had enforced his power. A glance at Constance somewhat reassured him. Could his nephew be long wholly given up to vain regrets, with one so devoted, ard so sweet, at his side? Such affection must bring with it hope and healing. For the first time, too, he thought with pity on her who was forsaken. He knew there was some prior attachment. What at this moment might not some young and lovely victim be suffering!

But it was not in his temper to dwell long on vain regrets: he soothed them by turning to the numerous advantages which attended this alliance, and was soon able to say calmly to his daughter,—"Shall I lead you down-stairs?"

"A few minutes yet," exclaimed she. "Leave me a little while alone."

The door closed after Lord Norbourne; and Constance flung herself on her knees, and half said, half wept, a thanksgiving for her entire happiness.

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE MARRIAGE.

Bind the white orange-flowers in her hair,
 Soft be their shadow, soft and somewhat pale—
For they are omens. Many anxious years
 Are on the wreath that bends the bridal veil.

The maiden leaves her childhood and her home,
 All that the past has known of happy hours—
Perhaps her happiest ones. Well may there be
 A faint wan colour on those orange-flowers:

For they are pale as hope, and hope is pale
 With earnest watching over future years;
With all the promise of their loveliness,
 The bride and morning bathe their wreath with tears.

Constance was yet kneeling when Mrs. Courtenaye entered, who was wholly softened by the attitude, and the tearful eyes hat met her as she approached. She did not like Constance: here was a timidity and a gentleness about her, which, to her

calm and determined temper, seemed only weakness. Besides, however innocent, she was the cause of her own suffering; and she confounded the unoffending girl with her father. But it was impossible to be quite untouched with Constance's meek sweetness, and she took her hand with a degree of kindness which melted the poor child into tears of tender gratitude. But she was silent, for Constance feared her aunt too much for any burst of the confidence with which she indulged herself to her father. They went down stairs together, and found the bridal party assembled.

The guests had been selected with Lord Norbourne's usual judgment. They were only some three or four, of the highest rank. A young nobleman, connected with the ministry, who had come from Sir Robert Walpole to summon Lord Norbourne, on business of the first importance, to London, was the sole cavalier, to the great discontent of the two bridesmaids. These were the Ladies Diana and Frances, who came with their mother, the Duchess of Pympton, a distant connexion of the family. Tall, dark, with harsh features, from which five-and-thirty summers had stolen all youthful bloom, if they had ever had any—a fact admitting of more than doubt—they afforded no injudicious contrast to the bride. Constance, half hidden in her veil, blushing and agitated, looked, at least, lady-like and interesting; and there was as little room given as possible for a contrast between the appearance of the bride and bridegroom.

The chapel was a small Gothic edifice, which had been built by Lord Norbourne, and who had spared no pains on its decoration: yet its chief ornaments were tombs. There was the monument of his wife, and child after child had followed. Every niche was filled by a funeral urn, and by marble shapes that bent down in a pale eternity of sorrow. In one arch was a marble tablet, bearing a date, but no name; and beneath was a kneeling female: the beautiful hands were clasped as if in prayer and penitence; but the bowed-down face was hidden in the long hair, that fell unbound over the exquisitely sculptured figure. There was a grave beneath, but who slept in that grave was known only to Lord Norbourne. There was in the stillness of the statues around, so colourless, so calm, that which struck cold upon the guests. All around spoke of desolation and of death, till life seemed but a mockery in their presence. What folly to crowd so brief a span with the toil and the fever in which men spend their days! It is a strange and solemn thing that the bridal ritual should take place in the presence of the dead. Dust that a breath could blow aside, yet that was

once, like ourselves, animate with hope, passion, and sorrow, is below; around are the vain memorials of human grief and human pride; yet all alike dedicated to the gone.

Norbourne Courtenaye glanced around on the marble monuments—they seemed fitting company at his bridal: the service sounded like a burial rite; it was the funeral of his hopes. Mechanically he obeyed the directions to place the ring on the finger of his bride. Constance started at the death-cold hand that touched her own; for the first time she ventured to raise her eyes to his, but they answered not to that timid and imploring look: his thoughts were far away. Alas! for Constance, had she known that they dwelt upon another! Even as it was, the pale cheek, and the sad, abstracted eye, sent a chill to the heart of the young bride: she was pale and absent as the bridegroom. When the service was over, she started, as if from a dream, when all pressed round to congratulate her as the wife of Norbourne Courtenaye.

CHAPTER XXIV.

CONFIDENCE.

> Fear not to trust her destiny with me:
> I can remember, in my early youth,
> Wandering amid our old ancestral woods,
> I found an unfledged dove upon the ground.
> I took the callow creature to my care,
> And fain had given it to its nest again:
> That could not be, and so I made its home
> In my affection, and my constant care.
> I made its cage of osier-boughs, and hung
> A wreath of early leaves and woodland flowers:
> I hung it in the sun; and, when the wind
> Blew from the cold and bitter east, 'twas screened
> With care that never knew forgetfulness.
> I loved it, for I pitied it, and knew
> Its sole dependence was upon my love.

"I UNDERSTOOD, my lord, that you wished to see me," said Norbourne Courtenaye, with the calm, cold manner, that had marked his bearing to his uncle since his marriage had been decided upon: "I fear that I have kept you waiting, for I went first to your own room—"

"It was here," interrupted Lord Norbourne, "that I wished to see you."

He paused, and his nephew stood by with his arms folded, in silence, as if resolved not to begin the conversation. There was much resemblance between the two: both had the same cast of features. It is curious to remark how a family sets its mark on its descendants: assuredly there is a subtle sympathy in the ties of blood, still one of the mysteries of our nature. But if their old line gave the resemblance, time had marked the difference. The meaning on Norbourne's fine features came direct from the feeling; his eyes were thoughtful, but they had that deep and inward look which belongs only to the dreaming meditations of youth. He wore a saddened and subdued air; it was obvious that he had not yet learned sorrow's bitterest task—that of concealment.

Lord Norbourne's countenance needed closer analysis to detect its hidden meaning. His dark brow was knit, and his darker eye rarely wore any other expression than that of penetration. He looked upon you, and read you through. His features, fine, high, and somewhat stern in repose, were yet capable of being moulded to any meaning it was his will that they should express. Now, though his mouth worked with agitation, it had not lost its bland and habitual smile; but there was that in his face few ever saw in the self-possessed, the cold and reserved Lord Norbourne. He paced the gallery with quick and irregular steps, while his eye more than once met that of his nephew, who, however, preserved a resolute silence.

"This is most unworthy hesitation," exclaimed he, at last; and, approaching the fire-place, leaned opposite Norbourne. "I see," continued he, "that you resent my conduct. I do not wonder at it. I reproach myself for it; but, at least, hear me before you utterly condemn me. I find I cannot do without some portion of your good-will; for, little as you may believe it, you have ever been dear to me as a child of my own."

The earnestness of his uncle's manner touched Norbourne in spite of himself; and, almost unconsciously, he made a step nearer to him, as he continued:—

"I am ambitious: I own it; for what are a man's talents given, but for a high and influential career? I was ambitious for myself; I am now ambitious for my line. I do take pride in thinking of our house restored to all its original honours. Have you none in knowing the position you will occupy?"

"Do you think," said Norbourne, sternly, "wealth and rank would have tempted me to act as I have done? Lord Norbourne, I tell you to your face, but that you had in your power the name and fame of a beloved mother—ay, and her life too, I

would never have married your daughter. I loved—I do love another; but why should I speak of warm and natural emotions to one who knows not of them ?"

"Poor Constance !" exclaimed her father.

"Nay," interrupted Norbourne, "do not fear for her. She, at least, shall never know that at the altar where I pledged my faith did I also sacrifice my sweetest and my best hopes. She shall not be the victim of your ambition. Carefully will I guard her from any sorrow that rests with me: pity girdles her round with a tenderness, deep almost as love. And now, my lord, I conclude that our conference is at an end: why should we inflict unnecessary pain on each other?"

"Not yet," exclaimed his uncle, yielding wholly to the impulse of strong emotion. "Norbourne, I am neither so callous nor so worldly as you deem me. Look on these portraits !" and he pointed to four pictures that hung on the wall opposite. Never was the painter's skill taxed to give more lovely likenesses of humanity. There were four blooming girls, all drawn at full length; and, though different, it was hard to say which was the most beautiful. "Are not those children of whom any father might be proud?" asked Lord Norbourne. "For years I hoped to have a son; and, when that was denied me, I thought ever of one of those girls as your wife. Years passed by, and each year saw one of those bright heads laid low in the grave. My poor sickly Constance alone escaped the hereditary malady which destroyed her lovely and healthful sisters. A year ago that neglected child, so young, so feeble, and so uncared for, was my nurse through the fever which even the hireling would hardly brave. I loved her with that deep remorseful love which feels that it is a late atonement. I saw (for she is too ignorant and too guileless for disguise) that her heart was wholly yours. I saw her, too, delicate, sensitive; ready to fade away before life's first sorrow. I could not bear to think that disappointed affection should hurry her to an early grave. Norbourne, in the name of the deepest and the holiest feeling that I have, I implore you to forgive me."

Norbourne took the proffered hand; his anger had vanished in sympathy, and they stood for a few moments in agitated silence, which was broken by Lord Norbourne.

"I know that you are now in love: but what is love?—a young man's feverish dream, whose realities, on awakening, he would give worlds to recall. I loved once—foolishly, madly; for I sacrificed every thing to my boyish passion. I married one without fortune or connexion; for her sake I gave up all

those higher schemes on which my hopes had fed from very childhood. For her sake I was content to endure poverty, and —far worse obscurity. Do you wish to see the face which made me—a fool?"

He stepped forward, and touched the spring of a picture-case, which Norbourne had not before seen opened. He almost started at the dazzling loveliness of the countenance on which he gazed. The large black eyes flashed, as if they realized the old poet's description :

> "Such eyes on Jove had thrown
> A lightning, fierce and sudden as his own."

The colour on the cheek was rich and eloquent, and the small mouth curved with a consciousness of its own loveliness. It was one of those faces that at once appeal to the imagination: you feel that there must be a history belonging to it. You have a foreboding of passion, and its fulfilment, despair.

CHAPTER XXV.

THE RESULT.

> And this, then, is love's ending. It is like
> The history of some fair southern clime :
> Hot fires are in the bosom of the earth,
> And the warmed soil puts forth its thousand flowers,
> Its fruits of gold—summer's regality :
> And sleep and odours float upon the air,
> Making it heavy with its own delight.
> At length the subterranean element
> Bursts from its secret solitude, and lays
> All waste before it. The red lava stream
> Sweeps like a pestilence ; and that which was
> A garden for some fairy tale's young queen
> Is one wild desert, lost in burning sand.
> Thus it is with the heart. Love lights it up
> With one rich flush of beauty. Mark the end:
> Hopes, that have quarrelled even with themselves,
> And joys that make a bitter memory ;
> While the heart, scorched and withered, and o'erwhelmed
> By passion's earthquake, loathes the name of love.

Both stood for a few moments gazing on the picture; when Lord Norbourne exclaimed, as he saw his nephew's look of admiration,—" Yes, the bait was fair enough ; and how was I

repaid for my utter devotion—for the sacrifice of my future? By desertion. She left me for another—how immeasurably my inferior! I had my revenge, for I followed them abroad. She had already been false to him as to me. He was alone, but not the less did I avenge my dishonour: we met and he fell. Years afterwards, and I met her also; changed but lovely, amid sickness and want. I saved her from destitution, and saw her once more; for I stood by her death-bed, and forgave her. There is a grave, without a name, in yonder chapel: she so fair, and so frail, sleeps below."

Norbourne again grasped his uncle's hand. He could not speak: it was as if, for the first time in his life, he had looked beyond the seeming surface of humanity. Was it possible that the calm, the polished, the worldly Lord Norbourne could have been shaken by such fierce passion—touched by such soft feelings as he had really known? And yet so it ever is. How little do we know of even our most familiar associates! Hopes feelings, and passion, petrify one after another; the crust of experience soon hardens over the hidden past; and who, looking on the levelled and subdued exterior, could dream of the wreck and ravage that lies below?

"I bought my experience dearly," continued Lord Norbourne; "but I did buy it. Henceforth woman assumed with me her natural destiny: a toy, if fair, for a vacant hour; a tool, if rich, for advancement in the world. I next married for fortune and family, and I found I had acted wisely. Lady Norbourne and myself got on perfectly together. My house was one of the best appointed in London, and her relations deemed it due to one connected with their family to take every opportunity of serving me. We never descended to the vulgarism of a quarrel. People said that neither of us had a heart, but it appears to me that politeness is an excellent substitute. I really felt very uncomfortable when she died. But I hear my travelling carriage; and business has long been to me duty, inclination, mistress, friend. But tell me that we part kindly?"

"My dear uncle!" replied Norbourne, who accompanied the traveller to his carriage with very different feelings from what, an hour before, he had deemed it possible that he could have entertained.

A feather on the wind, a straw on the stream—such are, indeed, the emblems of humanity. We resolve, and our resolutions melt away with a word and a look; we are the toys of an emotion. And yet I think Norbourne was right in his sudden revulsion in favour of his uncle. We are rarely wrong when we

act from impulse. By that I do not mean every rash, and wayward, and selfish fantasy; but by allowing its natural course to the first warm and generous feeling that springs up in the heart. Second thoughts are more worldly, more cold, and calculate on some advantage. This is what the ancients meant when they said that the impulse came from the gods, but the motive from men. Our eager belief, our ready pity, our kindly sensations—these are the materials of good within us. As one of our poets says, with equal truth and beauty, "The heart is wise." We should be not only happier, but better, if we attended more to its dictates. Half the misery in the world arises from want of sympathy. We do not assist each other as we might do, because we rarely pause to ask, do they need our assistance? And this works out the moral of suffering: we need to suffer, that we may learn to pity.

CHAPTER XXVI.

LADY MARCHMONT TO SIR JASPER MEREDITH.

There is in life no blessing like affection:
It soothes, it hallows, elevates, subdues,
And bringeth down to earth its native heaven.
It sits beside the cradle patient hours,
Whose sole contentment is to watch and love;
It bendeth o'er the death-bed and conceals
Its own despair with words of faith and hope.
Life has nought else that may supply its place:
Void is ambition, cold is vanity,
And wealth an empty glitter, without love.

My dearest Uncle,—I have this morning been returning the visit of the young Duchess of Marlborough. I should lose the reputation that I am gradually acquiring among our impenetrables here, were I to confess the excitement which I felt at the idea of entering his house—the house of that great general under whose command you made your first charge. It was to be quite a visit *d'amitié*, so she was almost alone, in her closet richly furnished with crimson silk hangings, and the portraits of her father and mother. I was struck, not so much with the extraordinary beauty of the latter though extraordinary, it is, as with its extreme sweetness. I never saw such a loveable face. The imperious duchess had the eyes of a dove, and

the mouth of a child; and the hair had that soft, glossy silkness which I fancy usually belongs to a gentle and sensitive temperament. I could not help alluding to its loveliness.

"Yes," said the young duchess, "my mother's hair was quite remakable, both for its length and profusion. But will you believe that she cut it all off one day, in order to plague my father, whose especial admiration it was. He had left her displeased about some trifle, and she severed the favourite tresses, and laid them in a conspicuous place on a table in his room. The long curls disappeared, no one knew how, and my father never made the slightest allusion to their loss: but, after his death, they were found in his cabinet, where he kept all that he had most precious. Even my mother's haughty temper was fairly subdued by this; she never could allude to the circumstance without tears."

"After all," said Mr. Congreve, who was present, *madame la duchesse* well understood the principles by which your sex obtain dominion. I always thought that there was great truth in what the French lover said, on being asked by what means his mistress had obtained such an empire over him: *C'est qu'elle me querelle toujours.'"*

"I rather think," said a youthful Italian, just presented to me as la Signora Rosalba, and who was employed in finishing a miniature of the duchess, "that nothing gives offence between people who really love each other. The tempers may be irritated, but there is still a secret sympathy in the hearts."

"Moreover," replied Congreve, "it was a sort of flattery to the duke. It showed that she valued the power of plaguing him more than her own fairest ornament. Flattery is the r secret by which a woman keeps her lover."

"Ah!" exclaimed the Italian, raising the softest dark eyes that I ever saw, "you speak of the love in crowds and cities, made up of falsehood and vanity, not of that high and holy passion sent to elevate and redeem our nature—the religion of the heart."

There was something about the youthful artist, that interested me exceedingly. I must ask her to take my likeness for you. Painted by one so enthusiastic, it will come less surrounded by the vanities and follies of my present life. I never feel the value of affection so much as when I think of yours; nor its want, but when I look at my own home.

Well, I sometimes think that I should be glad to quarrel with Lord Marchmont, even like the Duke and Duchess of Marlborough: it would show that we cared for each other. But I

must write something else than these vague fantasies: and now for their very antipodes, Mr. Congreve. He is not bad-looking, and dresses to desperation; with a peculiarly soft and flattering manner. He seems to be witty against his will; and if, by some sally that will have its way, he makes you laugh, he is at once ashamed, and starts back into his usual languid and affected strain of compliment. Nature has made him an author and a wit; he blushes for both, and trusts that they are forgotten in the very fine gentleman. I was struck with the difference between his small affectation of denying and despising his own talents, and their laudable use, and the earnest belief in their nobility which exists in the Italian artist. The one belongs to a higher order of intelligence than the other.

Well, enthusiasm is the divine particle in our composition: with it we are great, generous, and true; without it, we are little, false, and mean. Do let me tell you one thing the signora said: "I always pray in German—the language is so expressive and energetic." I wished at the moment that I knew it, that I might pray for you, my dear uncle—my more than parent.

We are going to-night to a ball at the Duchess of Queensberry's. I wonder she is not afraid at the world of disappointment her invitations have created. She has asked every body but those who expected it. People are really not half thankful enough to her, she gives them so much to talk about. What, after all, is the great staple of conversation?—why, the faults and follies of others; and, generally speaking, they are insipid enough. How grateful, therefore, we ought to be to her Grace, whose follies are all of the most original order! Why, there is invention enough in them for a history,—

> "As histories are in these degenerate days."

And now for the toilet of your affectionate

HENRIETTA.

CHAPTER XXVII.

LADY MARCHMONT TO SIR JASPER MEREDITH.

> Mind, dangerous and glorious gift!
> Too much thy native heaven has left
> Its nature in thee, for thy light
> To be content with earthly home.
> It hath another, and its sight
> Will too much to that other roam;

And heavenly light, and earthly clay,
But ill bear with alternate sway;
Till jarring elements create
  The evil which they sought to shun,
And deeper feel their mortal state
  In struggling for a higher one.
There is no rest for the proud mind,
Conscious of its high powers confined;
Vain dreams and feverish hopes arise,
It is itself its sacrifice.

Is it not Le Sage, my dearest uncle, who says, "to judge by their own account, the people of England are the most unhappy people under the sun—with religion, liberty, and property, also, three meals a-day?" He was not far wrong, for nothing strikes me more forcibly than the universal tendency to grumble; conversation and complaint are synonymous terms. Our weather and our government are equally bad—at least every one says that they are.

I was at the dinner yesterday, which, you know, has long been the subject of my anticipation—the one at Lady Oxford's, where I was to meet Pope, Swift, Gay; in short, all the wit in the world. We had a delightful day: the dinner—and though it is difficult to appreciate an enjoyment into which you cannot, for the very life of you, enter—still I begin to think that a good dinner, is, at least, the stepping-stone to masculine felicity. The cook is one of the three Fates. Lady Oxford is a very good hostess. Without being clever enough to put people on their guard, she understands talent, which none can do without some of their own; and has a peculiar tact for putting a person's *amour propre* at rest by putting it in the best light. She knows how to ask questions judiciously: and it is a first requisite to make people feel it is easy to answer you; and, also, that their answer reflects credit on themselves.

You see that I am studying my part as future *dame de château*. I hope, in time, to make my house the most brilliant in London; but I do not agree with Lord Marchmont in thinking that wealth is the only thing requisite. Wealth is to luxury what marble is to the palace—it must be there as the first material; but taste, and taste only, can direct its after-use. The light arch, and the graceful column, owe their exquisite proportion to the skill with which they are modelled.

But I am wandering away from the assertion that I was about to make; namely, that, with all the appliances of cheerfulness, with all the means of wit, the chief portion of the "table-talk" turned upon individual and general grievances.

Each person was the most injured individual under the sun. Swift was, however, the one that most excited my sympathy. There is a stern melancholy in his dark features, inherent and engrossing, which rivets the attention. The brow is black and overhanging, and the eyes gloomy while in a state of repose; but, when they kindle, it is like living fire, with a sort of strange animal fierceness in them. His laugh is suppressed and bitter; and I shall not easily forget the sarcasm of his smile as he told us of the Prince of Orange's harangue to the mob at Portsmouth: "We are come," said he, "for your good—for all your goods." "A universal principle," added Swift, "of all governments; but, like most other truths, only told by mistake." His manner is abrupt, and yet I could fancy it very kind sometimes; and he is more eloquent than I ever before heard in general society. Nothing could be more gloomy than the picture he drew of his residence in Ireland. It is that worst of solitudes, an intellectual one: above all things, the mind requires interchange. The heart may, perhaps, shut itself up in itself, as the motto on a pretty French seal that I have says,—

> "Avec les souvenirs et les esperances
> L'on se passe de bonheur;"

but the mind frets that only feeds upon its own resources. Swift's existence is one of the intellect: he does not look to the pleasures, to the affections, to the small employments of life; every sentence, however careless, betrays his contempt for them. He needs an active and stirring career—he needs to be taken out of himself—communication and contradiction are to him necessary elements; and, in the dull seclusion of his Irish deanery, he is wholly shut out from them. "It closes round me like a pall:" I cannot tell you the impression these words made upon me: they conjured up so many hours of dulness and of discontent. It must be so mortifying to a man, the consciousness of talent, and the knowledge that he is shut out from the sphere to which its exercise belongs. But here, again, is the old variance between nature and fortune; each seems to delight in marring the work of the other.

There was one contrast in Swift with his fellow wits: they grew gayer as the dinner progressed, he did not. At first, his conversation was very lively—a sort of fierce vivacity, like a bird or beast of prey dashing at its game. He gave a very amusing account of his journey from Ireland; how he was not only stopped at the "Three Crosses," by a shrew of a landlady, but scolded into the bargain. His revenge was most cha-

racteristic. "Most people," said he to the landlord, "are content or discontent with paying their bill. I do more: I leave you, as a legacy, an invaluable piece of advice," pointing to some lines that he had written, with a diamond ring, on the window pane,—

> "There are three crosses to your door,
> Hang up your wife, and there'll be four"

As the evening closed in, I was struck with the gloom which seemed to fall upon him. His face lost its intellectual animation—it was almost stupid; and I never before saw black despondency so expressed in human eye. Even now I try to shake off the painful impression. But I must leave the remainder of the dinner till to-morrow, trusting that you will not say,

> "Un diner rechauffé ne valut jamais rien."

We are going to play loo at Mrs. Howard's; but, alas! though he is the fashion, I am quite inaccessible to the fascinations of Pam. Good-bye till to-morrow.

Your affectionate

HENRIETTA.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

LADY MARCHMONT TO SIR JASPER MEREDITH.

> Life's best gifts are bought dearly.. Wealth is won
> By years of toil, and often comes too late:
> With pleasure comes satiety; and pomp
> Is compassed round with vexing vanities:
> And genius, earth's most glorious gift, that lasts
> When all beside is perished in the dust—
> How bitter is the suffering it endures!
> How dark the penalty that it exacts!

MY DEAREST UNCLE,—I return at once to the dinner at Lady Oxford's. Mr. Pope was within two of me at table. At first our meeting was a little awkward: he could not forget that I had witnessed his mortification. Pope is more pettish than the Dean of St. Patrick's. He could not, I am persuaded, even comprehend the other's deep misanthropy. He takes pleasure in what Swift would disdain. I cannot imagine the dean laying out grass-plots, and devising grottoes; he has no elegant tastes,

—sources, it must be acknowledged, of great gratification to the possessor. Pope, moreover, is greedy: such a dinner he devoured, and then talked of his moderation! I do not think that he would have given Swift's answer to Lord B——, who tried to persuade him to dine with him by saying,—"I will send you my bill of fare." "Send me," was the reply, "your bill of company." Still, I am charitable enough to make great allowance for the capricious appetite of an invalid, more than I do for his predilection for Mrs. Martha Blount, who was also of our party. She is undeniably handsome—what you gentlemen call a fine woman; but she has cold, unkind eyes, and thin lips, which she bites. Now, if a bad temper has an outward and visible sign, it is that. I hear that she has great influence over the poet, and can readily believe it. He is affectionate, and keenly sensitive to his personal defects; and would, therefore, be at once grateful for, and flattered by, any display of feminine kindness. Moreover, in all domestic arrangements, it is the better nature that yields; a violent temper is despotic the moment that it crosses your threshold. I disliked her, too, for her depreciating way; she had an *if* and a *but* for every person named. Now, the individual who can find no good in any one else has certainly no good in himself:

> "How can we reason but from what we know?"

Pope talked very readily and playfully about his translation of Homer: for example, some discussion arising about what flower was meant by the asphodel of Homer, he said, laughing, —"Why, I believe it to be the poor yellow flower that grows wild in our fields: what would you say if I had rendered the line thus,—

> ——'The stern Achilles
> Stalked through a mead of daffodillies?'"

He also told me an anecdote quite as characteristic of the teller as that of Swift's. There was a Lord Russell, who had ruined his constitution by riotous living. He was not fond of field-sports, but used to go out with his dogs to hunt, for an appetite. If he felt any delightful approaches of hunger, he would cry out, "Oh, I have found it!" and ride home again, though in the middle of the finest chase.

"You see," said Pope, "there is no fool without some portion of sense."

Gay gave me more the idea of a clever child; he was dressed with the greatest neatness, and did not dislike a little raillery about his toilet. He has a sweet, placid expression of countenance; and an excellent appetite, which quite belied the melancholy manner in which he told us of his disappointments at court. He quoted that deeply pathetic passage of Spencer's,—

> "Full little knowest thou, who hast not tried
> What hell it is, in suing long, to bide;
> To lose good days, that might be better spent;
> To waste long nights in pensive discontent;
> To speed to-day, to be put back to-morrow;
> To feed on hope, to pine with fear and sorrow;
> To fret thy soul with crosses and with cares;
> To eat thy heart through comfortless despairs;
> To fawn, to crouch, to wait, to ride, to run,
> To spend, to give, to want, to be undone.

Yet there was something so irresistibly ludicrous in his manner, that there was not one of us but laughed at his misfortunes.

Alas, for human nature! even grief must take an attitude before it can hope for sympathy. I now understand on what principle our widows wear weeds, and our judges wigs. The imposing external appearance is every thing in this world.

The Duke and Duchess of Queensberry, however, have taken Gay under their especial patronage; and he lives with them. And now that the day is over, there is one great regret, which is, that, with all my wish to tell you every thing, I can remember so little. But the spirit of conversation cannot be caught and re-corked: moreover, of all our faculties, memory is the one the least under our control. I am sometimes amused, but oftener provoked, at the way in which a thing utterly escapes recollection, and then comes back when least expected, and, usually, when least wanted. Still my general impression is that of great interest and amusement; and you know, my dear uncle, you spoil me, by saying, "Only tell me every thing—your telling is enough." All my details, at least, serve to show you how anxious I am to make you acquainted with every thought of

Your affectionate

HENRIETTA.

CHAPTER XXIX.

LADY MARCHMONT TO SIR JASPER MEREDITH.

COURTIERS.

Not in a close and bounded atmosphere
Does life put forth its noblest and its best;
'Tis from the mountain's top that we look forth,
And see how small the world is at our feet.
There the free winds sweep with unfettered wing;
There the sun rises first, and flings the last,
The purple glories of the summer eve;
There does the eagle build his mighty nest;
And there the snow stains not its purity.
When we descend the vapour gathers round,
And the path narrows: small and worthless things
Obstruct our way; and, in ourselves, we feel
The strong compulsion of their influence.
We grow like those with whom we daily blend:
To yield is to resemble.

Ah, my dearest uncle! now I find the truth of what you used to tell me. I once thought that you drew human nature in too dark colours; I now begin to think that is wholly impossible. Here we are flattering and hating, envying and caressing, duping and slandering, complimenting and ridiculing, each other. I really doubt whether there be such a thing as a heart in the world: perhaps, after all, it is only an elegant superfluity kept for the use of poets. Certainly we have no use for it here.

In consequence of the recent death of the king, we preserve a decorous appearance of dulness; but black is very becoming to a fair skin, and public mourning never yet interfered with private gayety. I hear that his present majesty complains that he is no better off as king than he was as prince; the queen commanding to retain Mrs. Howard as *dame de ses pensées*. She is right; it is only positive qualities that are dangerous, and Mrs. Howard is made up of negations: not, I dare say, that she ever said a good downright "no" in her life. But you must make her acquaintance personally. Fancy a tall and fine figure in a green taffety dress, set off with rose-coloured ribbands, both colours well suited to her fair hair and skin; a white muslin apron, trimmed with delicate lace; ruffles of the same materials, showing to much advantage a white and rounded arm: a chip hat, with flowers, is placed quite at the back of the light hair, which leaves the white and broad forehead

exposed. By-the-by, talking of her fair hair, I must tell you an anecdote of the use to which it was once applied. When she and her husband were staying at Hanover, they asked some people to dinner, and Mrs. Howard was obliged to cut off her luxuriant tresses and sell them to pay for the said dinner! What a beginning! and, alas, what an excuse for any faults in her after-life! Think of all the wretchedness included in the single word *poverty*. Truly Shakspeare says,—

—— 'Want will perjure
The ne'er stain'd vestal."

But to proceed with my description: her features are regular, and the eyes a soft blue; and she is singularly young looking. Mrs. Howard is the very person to look young to the last. What fades the cheek, and marks the brow with lines, but the keen feeling and the passionate sorrow? and of these she is incapable. The only expression of her face is repose; and, I must add, a sweet and gentle repose. An attachment to her would be just an agreeable and easy habit.

My dear uncle must let me borrow one of his own phrases. Mrs. Howard is just the type of a social system, whose morality is expediency, and whose religion is good breeding. In such a close and enervating atmosphere, it is scarcely possible for a generous sympathy, or a warm emotion, to exist. Courtiers and wits crowd round the royal idol, flinging one a compliment, and another an epigram, all ready to be snatched up again; the first to be used to any who may succeed, and the second to be turned against herself: all were alike actuated by selfishness on the smallest scale.

Still, I must say, the life of a maid of honour is no sinecure. Lady Harvey was giving me the description of a day. First, there is the getting up early, which I, who should not know seven o'clock in the morning if I were to see it, think a most dreadful way of beginning the day. Then comes the imperative necessity of eating smoked Westphalian ham for breakfast: this is on the principle that imitation is the most delicate flattery. Then to horse—life and limb risked on hired hacks, and over hedge and ditch; the neck in comparative, the complexion in certain, danger. Home, then, they come in the middle of the day; blushing, not "celestial rosy red," but a good positive scarlet, with the heat; and also with a crimson mark on the forehead, from the pressure of the hat. Then they have to dress in a hurry, put on *pleine toilette*, and smiles for the princess's cir-

cle, where they stand, simper, and catch cold, till dinner. So much for attendance at court.

In the meantime, Mrs. Howard has found leisure for divers other *adorateurs.* Lord Bathurst even excited the royal jealousy; for the prince intimated to the lady, that all supplies would be cut off, to use a national figure of speech, if any flatteries were held too charming, save his own. This threat his royal highness thought was the most effective he could use. We always judge of others by ourselves; and his idea of Cupid's quiver is a rouleau. I heard a droll story of his courtship, in earlier days, of the beautiful Mrs. Campbell, when maid of honour. After sitting in silence for some time, he drew out his purse, and began to count his money. The lady pushed his elbow, and down rolled the glittering coin. They say that he has not yet forgiven her—not for the breach of etiquette, but for the risk that the poor dear guineas ran from the crevices on the floor. Lord Bathurst does not appear to me to be a very dangerous rival. I always long to quote two lines from Gay's "Fables:"

> "Shall grave and formal pass for wise,
> When men the solemn owl despise?"

Lord Peterborough, the romantic, the chivalric, was another of her *adorateurs,*—he who is enough to make one believe in the doctrine of transmigration; for no soul but that of Lord Herbert of Cherbury could possibly inhabit his body.

Lady Mary Wortley Montague, who knows every thing about every body, has greatly diverted me with the Great Cyrus style of their correspondence. I remember hearing you read—ah, dear uncle, how pleasant were those winter evenings!—of some plant that exists floating on the air, never deigning to touch our meaner earth. The *grands sentimens* of these epistles have a similar kind of existence. One compliment is so very original, that I must quote it. He says,

"The chief attribute of the devil is, tormenting. Who could look upon you, and give you that title? Who can feel what I do, and give you any other? But, most certainly, I have more to lay to the charge of my fair one than can be objected to Satan or Beelzebub. We believe that they have only a mind to torment because they are tormented,—they, at least, are our companions in suffering; but my white devil partakes of none of my torments."

He concludes by exclaiming,—

"Forgive me if I threaten you: take this for a proof, as well as punishment. If you can prove inhuman, you shall have re-

proaches from Moscow, China, or the barbarous quarters of Tartary."

How he was to carry this "last bold threat" into execution, I know not. However, do not be too sorry for him: he has consoled his misery in the smiles of Mrs. Robinson. Perhaps he may urge with Mrs. Howard, that she had such influence over him that he even followed her advice. In one of her answers she recommends a little inconstancy, and says,

"Successful love is very unlike heaven, because you may have success one hour, and lose it the next. Heaven is unchangeable. Who can say so of love? In love there are as many heavens as there are women; so that if a man be so unhappy as to lose one heaven, he need but look for another, instead of throwing himself headlong into hell."

Some of our fine gentlemen about town would say that this is what his lordship has actually done; or, what is much the same, he is married: for they do say that there is a secret marriage between him and the fair Anastasia. I passed her in his berlin the other day, and just caught a glimpse of very pretty features, with an interesting and sad expression. I believe that she is his wife, because I always believe for the best. This I do for the sake of originality—one likes to do differently to every body else.

I must conclude with a characteristic ejaculation of Lord Portmore—a sort of plaster cast, in bread and milk, of Lord Harvey, who has quite a sect. Lord Portmore is about to build a house. A very fine situation was proposed to him, where he might have a noble view of the ocean; but he started back, with an attitude of terror Betterton might envy, when Hamlet meets his father's ghost, and cried out,—"Oh, Christ! the sea looks so fierce that it frights me!"

And now good night. If they do nothing else, my long letters ought to put you to sleep. Once for all, I make no apologies for their egotism or their incoherency. The first you will take as a thing of course. Writing to you is thinking on paper; and as to the second, things here happen too fast for me to sort them. You must take my events as I do the ribands from my box—I snatch the first that comes to hand, from not having a moment to choose between them. I fear, however, that I cannot have left you an atom of patience; but still bear with, and love

Your affectionate

HENRIETTA.

CHAPTER XXX.

A FIRST DISAPPOINTMENT.

The deep, the long, the dreaming hours,
That I have pass'd with thee,
When thou hadst not a single thought
Of how thou wert with me.

I heard thy voice, I spoke again,
I gazed upon thy face;
And never scene of actual life
Could bear a deeper trace.

Than all that fancy conjured up,
And made thee look and say;
Till I have loathed reality,
That chased each dream away.

Alas! this is vain, fond, and false;
Thy heart is not for me;
And, knowing this, how can I waste
My very soul on thee?

I BELIEVE that, to the young, suspense is the most intolerable suffering. Active misery always brings with it its own power of endurance. What a common expression it is to hear, "Well, if I had known what I had to go through beforehand, I should never have believed it possible that I could have done it." But it is a dreadful thing to be left alone with your imagination, to have to fancy the worst, and yet not know what that worst may be; and this, in early youth, has a degree of acute anguish that after years cannot know. As we advance in life, we find all things here too utterly worthless to grieve over them as we once could grieve: we grow cold and careless; the dust, to which we are hastening, has entered into the heart.

But no girl of Ethel Churchill's age could hold this "inevitable creed." Hitherto she had thought but little—she had only felt. She loved Norbourne Courtenaye without a doubt, and without a fear. To her it seemed so natural to love him, that his affection appeared a thing of course, the inevitable consequence of her own. A sweet instinct soon told her that she was beloved, and it wanted no confirmation of words. Words are for the worldly, the witty, the practised; not for the simple, the timid, and the impassioned. It never occurred to her to question of the future: every thing was absorbed in the intense happiness of the present. She saw him go, unfettered by a

vow, unbound by aught of promise; yet his change never crossed her mind. She was sad to part with him—very sad; it was the sunshine past from her daily existence: but the sadness was unmixed with fear. He had never said that he would write, yet she fully relied upon his writing; simply because she felt that in his place, she would have written.

Norbourne was very wrong not to write. True, he was so situated that an explanation was impossible; still a letter would have been a consolation, and she would so readily have believed whatever he had written. He said to himself, "How can I write? what shall I write? It is impossible to tell her on whose sweet face I have gazed till, though the soft eyes were never raised, she knew that I could not but look; she by whose side I have lingered hours—how can I tell her that I am about to marry another?"

Day by day passed by, and Ethel remained in an uncertainty that grew more and more insupportable. It was sad to mark the change that was passing over her. Her soft colour faded, or else deepened with feverish agitation. Her step, that had been so light, now loitered on its way;

> For nothing like the weary step
> Betrays the weary heart.

She used to bound through the plantations, her eye first caught by one object and then another, gazing round for something to admire and to love. Now she walked slowly, her eyes fixed on the ground, as if, in all the wide fair world, there was nothing to attract nor to interest. She fed her birds carefully still; but she no longer lingered by the cage to watch, nor sought to win their caresses by a playfulness that showed she was half a child. Now her work dropped on her knee, and her book fell from her hand; she was perpetually seeking excuses for change of place; and the change brought added discomfort. The sole thing to which she turned with any wish to do, was the frequent visits that she paid to Sir Jasper Meredith.

The restraint that she put upon herself, while with her grandmother, was too much for one so young and unpractised; it was so hard to talk on every subject but the one of which her very soul was full: but going to that kind old man was a relief—it brought its own reward, because it was a kindness. It soothed her to feel that she was of importance to any one; and she was so grateful to Henrietta for her affectionate notes and messages—her friend, at least, had not forgotten her. Moreover, she took a strange pleasure in seeing Sir Jasper Meredith receive

letters: it was the heart hovering about the object that was yet consuming it. By degrees their conversations grew more and more interesting. A few weeks before, there would have been nothing in herself that responded to his gloomy views of humanity; now she felt their truth in her own depression.

The old poet pursued the usual course, when he said,—

> "When I am sad, to sadnesse I applie
> Each leaf, each flower, each herbe, that I passe bye."

Ethel looked on the fair face of nature only to see one image, and she now surrounded it with all the agonies of doubt.

CHAPTER XXXI.

AN OLD MAN'S VIEW OF LIFE.

> We tremble even in our happiness;
> Hurried and dim, the unknown hours press
> Heavy with care or grief, that none may ever guess.
>
> The future is more present than the past:
> For one look back a thousand on we cast,
> And Hope doth ever Memory outlast.
>
> For Hope say Fear—Hope is a timid thing,
> Fearful, and weak, and born in suffering;
> At least, such hopes as human life can bring.
>
> Its home, it is not here, it looks beyond
> And while it carries an enchanter's want,
> Its spells are conscious of their earthly bond.

Ethel used often to go of an evening and pass an hour with Sir Jasper Meredith, who was always glad to see her, and always admitted her into his library. A painter might have taken the scene for some laboratory of the olden time, occupied by an Italian alchymist, and one fair child who had grown up, like a dream of human beauty, amid study and seclusion. She was seated on a low seat by the hearth, wrapped still, more from forgetfulness than cold, in her mantle. The fire-light, which was flickering and uncertain, left her figure in complete shade, but threw sudden gleams of radiance on her face. What a change had a few weeks wrought there!

On the moonlit evening which collected our young party to-

gether by the little fountain, Ethel was the cherub of the circle—a very dream of child-like, roseate, innocent loveliness. She had still that peculiar cast of beauty which the immortal artists of Italy have associated with our idea of angelic nature; but it was now that of a seraph, who has both knowledge and pity. The long fair hair was thrown carelessly back, while the gleams of the hearth kindled it like burning gold. This made the paleness of the face more conspicuous, and there was an impress of sadness, terrible to mark in one so young. The attitude,—the hands clasped, and the form drooping carelessly forward—was one of utter dejection. The eye-lashes shone with unshed tears; there was too much uncertainty for the relief of weeping. The large blue eyes were fixed on the fire; dilated and unconscious, they knew not what they saw. Alas! it was too soon with Ethel for the past to engross the spirit, that should have been hopeful and buoyant, so entirely.

"All I hope is," exclaimed Sir Jasper, breaking the silence into which they had gradually sunk,—"that Henrietta will never love. She is guarded against it both by knowledge and ambition. She has not, like most girls, been sedulously kept from considering what is in reality the most important subject they can consider. On the contrary, she has, from the first, been taught to examine and to know the evil which mere selfishness should teach her to shun."

"You think love, then, to be an evil?" asked Ethel, timidly.

"I look upon it," replied the old man, "as the greatest calamity to which our nature is subject. What is it but having our happiness taken out of our own hands, and delivered, bound and bartered, into that of another."

"But that other," exclaimed Ethel, "may delight in making it more precious than their own."

"The chances are fearfully against it," replied the old man. "Nature and fate rarely accord their old dark variance. You are by the one formed to be beloved, and to love. As all experience shows, the probabilities are, that you will waste the rich treasures of your affection on one who has none to give in return, or who is wholly unworthy of the gift."

"But," persisted his companion, "experience also shows instances of mutual and enduring affection."

"And how Fate prepares the path for Love," returned Sir Jasper, "by surrounding it with difficulty, by trying it with poverty and by absence, till the worn-out spirit sinks beneath some last disappointment: but this is an uncommon instance. Mutual and lasting attachment is the rarest shape taken by suffering."

"And the sweetest," said Ethel, in so low a voice as scarcely to be audible.

"But what," continued Meredith, "is the ordinary history of the heart? We yield to some strong and sudden impulse. One sweet face sheds its own loveliness over earth. A subtle pleasure, unknown before, enters into the commonest thing. We gaze on the stars, and dream of an existence spiritual and lovely as their own, far removed from all lower cares, from all the meaner and baser portion of our ordinary path. The face of nature has grown fairer than of old; a thousand graceful fantasies are linked with every leaf and flower. The odour that comes from the violet with the last sobs of a spring shower, is more fragrant from recalling the faint breathing of one beloved mouth. We turn the poet's page, now, to find a thousand hidden meanings, only to be detected by a passionate sympathy; for poetry is the language set apart for love."

"Ah, how true that is!" exclaimed Ethel, stopping short, and colouring at the idea of betraying that secret which, though the soul's dearest mystery, is never kept from others.

"But this brief abode in fairy-land is dearly purchased," continued Sir Jasper; "too late we find that the dominion of another is an iron rule. We doubt, we fear, we dread, only to be at last—how bitterly—undeceived! We find that truth is a mockery; and confidence but a laying bare of the heart to the beak of the vulture. We are mortified because we have been duped, and that by means of our kindliest affections; hence we grow suspicious. Our feelings are checked, and we are afraid of their indulgence—why give weapons against our own peace? Hence we become cold, doubtful, stern,—how are the elements of happiness departed from us! It is life's first lesson, and its severest; we shall never suffer so bitterly again, because we can never more know such keen enjoyment: yet this first lesson is but the type of all that are to come. Throughout our weary pilgrimage we are duped and betrayed! One hope after another dies away like a star in the dim chill light of morning and reality. Our feelings are exhausted; our memory stored with images of pain. Our mistress deceived us at first, and our friends have gone and done likewise. Tired and embittered, we take refuge in a harsh indifference; the dust of the highway is upon us, and the heart becomes its own tomb. All the better part of us has gone down to the grave, while we sit wearily by its side, the wan shadows of what once we were. Life, after all its fever and struggle has only one dark hope left; and that hope is death!"

The old man's voice sank, like a knell, amid the stillness of that gloomy chamber, and he sank back fatigued in his Gothic seat, the very image of the desolate old age he had painted. While Ethel, who sat cowering by the hearth, was equally the image of youthful despondency. Both were silent; for the aged man was sad to think of the past, and the young girl trembled to think of the future. A few minutes passed, when both were aroused from their stupor by the entrance of a servant with a letter from Henrietta.

CHAPTER XXXII.

DIFFERENT OPINIONS.

Doubt, despairing, crime, and craft,
Are upon that honied shaft.
It has made the crowned king
Crouch beneath its suffering;
Made the beauty's cheek more pale
Than the foldings of her veil:
Like a child the soldiers kneel,
Who had mocked at flame or steel;
Bade the fires of genius turn
On their own breasts; and there burn,
A wound, a blight, a curse, a doom,
Bowing young hearts to the tomb.
Well may storm be on the sky,
And the waters roll on high,
When that passion passes by:
Earth below, and heaven above,
Well may bend to thee, O Love!

While this conversation was going on between Sir Jasper Meredith and Ethel Churchill, one of almost a similar kind was progressing between the very object of his solicitude and Lady Mary Wortley. After a hard day's shopping, they had come home laden with bargains, and the dressing-room was strewed with Indian fans, ivory boxes, and lace. They were going to dine *tête-à-tête*, as there was a gay ball in perspective, and they needed a little recruiting. Chloe, who had never forgotten his mistress's brilliant suggestion of the pigmies, exhausted his genius in the slight, but exquisite dinner, which he sent up, and which was, at least, duly appreciated by Lady Mary.

"There is something," exclaimed she, "wanting in the composition of one who can be indifferent to the fascination of such an omelet as this."

"I own," replied Henrietta, "I never care what I eat."

"More shame for you!" returned her companion; "it only shows how little you consider your duty to yourself."

"My duty to myself!" cried Lady Marchmont; "why, that would be

> 'Roots from the earth, and water from the spring,'

according to the principles laid down in moral essays."

"Moral essays are only a series of mistakes," interrupted her ladyship: "our first duty to ourselves, is to enjoy ourselves as much as possible. Now, to accomplish that, we must cultivate all our bad qualities: I can assure you I am quite alarmed when I discover any good symptoms."

"You are laughing!" replied her listener.

"I laugh at most things," returned the other; "and that is the reason why people in general do not understand me. A person who wishes to be popular, should never laugh at any thing. A jest startles people from that tranquil dulness in which they love to indulge: they do not like it till age has worn off the joke's edge. Moreover, there is no risk in laughing, if a great many laugh before you venture to laugh too."

"How very true!" exclaimed Henrietta; "there is nothing so little understood as wit."

"People cannot bear," replied her ladyship, "to be expected to understand what, in reality, they do not, and are ashamed to confess: it mortifies their self-love. I am persuaded, if all gay badinage were prefaced by an explanation, it would be infinitely better received."

"Why," said Lady Marchmont. "that would be sending the arrow the wrong way."

"A very common way of doing things in this world," was the answer; "and," she added, "I do not care about being popular: and, indeed, rather like being hated; it gives me an opportunity of using up epigrams which would otherwise be wasted. Our enemies, at least, keep our weapons in play; but for their sake, the sarcasm and the sword would alike rust in the scabbard."

"I care much more for being generally liked than you do," said Henrietta.

"I do not care about it at all," replied Lady Mary; "if I did, I should not say the things that I do; but, next to amusing, I like to astonish."

"I would rather interest," replied Lady Marchmont.

"Shades of the grand Cyrus! that voluminous tome I use

to read so devotedly,—your empire is utterly departed from me!" exclaimed her ladyship: "I have long since left romance behind—

> 'Once, and but once, that devil charmed my mind,
> To reason deaf, and observation blind:'

now I look upon my lover as I do my dinner, a thing very agreeable and very necessary, but requiring perpetual change."

"What a simile!" cried Henrietta, with uplifted hands and eyes.

"Believe me, my dear," returned the other, "love is a mixture of vanity and credulity. Now, these are two qualities that I sedulously cultivate: they conduce to our chief enjoyments."

"My definition of love," said the young countess, with a faint sigh, "would be very different to yours."

"Yes," replied Lady Mary, "you have all sorts of fanciful notions on the subject. I know what you would like;—an old place in the country, half ruins, half flowers, with some most picturesque-looking cavalier, who

> 'Lived but on the light of those sweet eyes!'"

"Well," interrupted Henrietta, "I see nothing so very appalling in such a prospect. How would our thoughts grow together! how would my mind become the image of his! What a world of poetry and of beauty we might create around us! I can imagine no sacrifice in life that would not cheaply buy the happiness of loving and being loved."

"Very fine and very tiresome," answered the other, with half a yawn, and half a sneer. "How weary you would be of each other: to see the same face—to hear the same voice; why, my dear child, I give you one single week, and then,—

> 'Abandoned by joy, and deserted by grace,
> You will hang yourselves both in the very same place!'"

"At least," replied Henrietta, "we should carry on our sympathy to the very last. Though I cannot peculiarly admire its coincidence, I should say,

> 'Take any shape but that.'"

"If it does not take that," cried Lady Mary, "it will take some other just as bad. Believe me, we are all of us false, vain, selfish, inconstant; and the sooner we cease to look for any

thing else, the better: we save ourselves a world of unreasonable expectation, and of bitter disappointment!"

"I would not think like you," replied Lady Marchmont, "not for the treasures of the crowned Ind. I devoutly believe in the divinity of affection; and my ideal of love, is affection in its highest state of enthusiasm and devotion. No sacrifice ever appeared to me great, that was made for its sweet sake."

"The Lord have mercy upon such notions!" cried Lady Mary, throwing herself back in her chair.

Sir Jasper would have been tempted to re-echo her ejaculation, and he would have been almost right. To love another, is too often the sad, yet sweet seal, put upon a bond of wretchedness, at least to a woman. How is her earnest, her self-sacrificing, her devoted attachment, repaid?—By neglect, falsehood, and desertion!

CHAPTER XXXIII.

THE END OF DOUBT.

I tell thee death were far more merciful
Than such a blow. It is death to the heart;
Death to its first affections, its sweet hopes;
The young religion of its guileless faith.
Henceforth the well is troubled at the spring;
The waves run clear no longer; there is doubt
To shut out happiness—perpetual shade;
Which, if the sunshine penetrate, 'tis dim,
And broken ere it reach the stream below.

It is strange how we hope, even against hope. The light came into Ethel's eyes, the colour flushed her cheek, when she caught sight of the letter. She believed that it must be for her; and it was with a sick feeling of disappointment that she saw the servant pass by her. I do not think that life has a suspense more sickening than that of expecting a letter which does not come. The hour which brings the post is the one that is anticipated, the only one from which we reckon. How long the time seems till it comes! With how many devices do we seek to pass it a little quicker! How we hope and believe each day will be our last of anxious waiting! The post comes in, and there is no letter for us. How bitter is the disappointment! and on every repetition it grows more acute. How immeasura-

ble the time seems till the post comes in again! The mind exhausts itself in conjectures; illness, even death, grow terribly distinct to hope in its agony—hope that is fear! We dread we know not what; and every lengthened day the misery grows more insupportable. Every day the anxiety takes a darker shadow. To know even the very worst of all we have foreboded, appears a relief.

The letter which Ethel had watched so eagerly, was the usual one from Henrietta. Her uncle almost snatched it, with hands that trembled with eagerness. His whole face lighted up. He read the direction; he looked at the seal with an expression of even childlike fondness; he hoarded his enjoyment by delaying to break it. At last he opened the letter: he watched the fair Italian hand with delight. Lady Marchmont's hand-writing was peculiarly fine; often careless, and sometimes illegible, but never to her uncle. Her affectionate remembrance was marked in the care with which she wrote, lest her letters might be troublesome to decipher. He read it at first eagerly; he needed to be assured of her health and happiness; then slowly, lingering over every word; and then, as was his custom, prepared to read it aloud.

In the meantime, Ethel had leant her head on her hand, while the large tears trickled slowly through her fingers. Every day the disappointment grew more insupportable. The sight of another's letter filled her with the bitterest envy. Suffering cannot come unattended with bad feelings. It was in vain that she checked herself; but the question would arise, Why should Henrietta be so much happier than herself? Scarcely could she command her attention when Sir Jasper began to read. That last evening when they were all together rose with terrible distinctness. The little fountain shone with the falling moonlight, and Henrietta's eyes seemed to grow darker and more intense as they filled with that pure and spiritual ray. Walter Maynard stood beside, pale and dejected; and nearer still leant Norbourne Courtenaye. How well she remembered his tender and earnest gaze, and the small knot of blue harebells on which her own glance fell; when, with sweet shame and pleasure, she looked down, too timid to look upon him. A more solemn and deep conviction of how utterly she loved him seemed to strike upon her heart. She started, for she heard his name; his name that, saving from her own lips, whispered in the stillness of midnight, she had not heard since his departure. Quietly, even carelessly, Sir Jasper was reading the following passage from Lady Marchmont's letter:—

"Do you remember a young man called Norbourne Courtenaye, who was staying at Churchill Manor? He has just married his cousin, Lord Norbourne's daughter. It is a splendid match. I thought him *épris* with our pretty Ethel, but the present marriage is quite one of interest. They are just now keeping the honeymoon: but, with such an heiress! I say that it ought to be called the harvest moon!"

Ethel started to her feet, the rich flush that had covered her cheek at the first mention of his name died into deadly paleness. The dew started on her forehead, and her eyes dilated with a wild, strange expression; their very blue seemed curdled and glazed. She snatched the letter from Sir Jasper, who started as her icy hand touched his: she attempted to read the passage herself, but the letters seemed to swim before her gaze; they turned to fire; the paper dropped from her grasp; a thick mist appeared to gather over the room; she gave a convulsive shudder, and dropped on the floor perfectly insensible.

It would have spared her a world of wretchedness, had she never recovered from that death-like trance. Truly did the ancients say, "Those whom the gods love, die young!" The flowers fall from the hand unwithered; the eyes close in the sunshine; they go down to the grave as if it were an altar, in their hour of hope and of beauty: they are spared life's longest agony—that of endurance, and endurance without expectation.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

CONFIDENCE.

I feel the presence of my own despair;
It darkens round me palpable and vast.
I gave my heart unconsciously; it filled
With love as flowers are filled with early dew,
And with the light of morning.
* * * * * *
If he be false, he who appeared so true,
Can there be any further truth in life,
When falsehood wears such seeming?

Sir Jasper started from his seat; absorbed in his letter, he had not perceived the alteration in Ethel's face, and the noise of her fall was the first thing that drew his attention. At once he felt what was the cause—the marriage he had so uncon-

sciously cummunicated—and he stood for an instant lost in thought. But he was too much of a chymist not to have remedies at hand, and he raised the inanimate form tenderly, as if it had been his own beloved child, and laid her on the couch. A few minutes sufficed to restore her to life, and also to consciousness. Slowly her scattered senses returned; she gazed on Sir Jasper, but her eye wandered round with an unsatisfied gaze; at last it rested on the letter, which had fallen on the ground.

"It is all true," muttered she, with a faint shudder. She pressed her hands firmly together, but the effort was vain, and she burst into a violent flood of tears. "Forgive me," she exclaimed, "I ought to wait till I get home; but I am wretched, very wretched."

The kind old man did not even attempt to speak; he knew too well the vanity of consolation, to mock her with it; but he took her hand gently, and his own eyes glittered with unusual moisture. An hour before, or an hour after, and Ethel would have locked her secret deep in her inmost heart; but now misery mastered timidity, and it was a relief to speak. Moreover, there was such encouragement in Sir Jasper's gentle and voiceless sympathy.

"I am sure that he did love me," exclaimed she: "young as I am, my heart tells me the truth. Ah, no, it has deceived me! There is no truth in any thing."

"Were you, then, engaged to Mr. Courtenaye?" said Sir Jasper, who asked the question solely to give her an opportunity of expressing the emotion it was too much to restrain.

"He told me he loved me," replied Ethel, in a tone of hopeless dejection, which went to her companion's heart.

"My poor child," said he, "I can urge nothing to comfort you. It will not soften your suffering to know how common it is."

"Common!" exclaimed she.

"Ay, common—too common. Life has many dreams; all sweet, and all fugitive; but love is the sweetest and most fugitive of all. I know nothing of Mr. Courtenaye; but I can perceive enough of this affair to see that he is one of those who, for a moment's selfish gratification, or for the yet meaner love of gratified vanity, will excite the deepest feelings, and trifle with the dearest hopes of all who trust them!"

"It is not possible!" said his listener, almost inaudibly, as Norbourne's open brow, and simple, yet earnest manner, arose on her recollection. His falsehood was too evident, yet she

could not bear to hear another say it. It seemed as if she had scarcely believed it, till confirmed by Sir Jasper. All in her mind was confusion; still the paramount sense that predominated over all others, was the bitter conviction of his unworthiness. Any thing but that she could have borne; but to find realised in him all she had ever heard of man's crime and cruelty, darkened the whole world; all belief in goodness had suddenly departed. Still, till Sir Jasper spoke, she felt rather as if labouring under a frightful dream than conscious of a frightful reality. She remained for a few moments in gloomy silence, when the entrance of a servant, with wood for the fire, roused her from her stupor. How strangely do the common domestic events, things of constant and hourly recurrence, jar upon the over-excited nerves! It seems to mock our inward misery to see all but the pulses of our own beating heart, go on so calmly and uniformly. There is an exaggeration in sorrow, which would fain demand universal sympathy: it does not find it, and the sorrow sinks the deeper.

"I am very late," exclaimed Ethel, starting up, and drawing her hood over her face: "dear, dear sir, I will thank you for your kindness to-morrow."

"God bless you, my poor child; but will you take a servant with you—you are not well enough to go home by yourself?"

"I am better alone: it is not five minutes' walk," said Ethel, eagerly.

Sir Jasper let her depart without further remonstrance; he sympathised with the feverish mood that craved the indulgence of solitude; he knew its worth. Ethel hurried along the well-known path, haunted by so many remembrances. She started from them: she felt as if she must drop, did she pause for a single moment. Never had she made such haste before; and yet it seemed an age before she gained her little chamber; once there, she flung herself on her bed, and gave way to the sorrow with which she no longer struggled. Who among you has not felt the relief that it is, after constraint on some overwhelming misery, to reach the loneliness of your own room, and there yield to the passionate weeping you cannot repress? Ethel was very young, and unaccustomed to grief; her feelings were in all their first freshness; and to such, forgetfulness seems impossible: but the body sinks under the mind, and nature can endure but a portion of suffering. Ethel cried like a child; and, like a child, cried herself to sleep.

There was a strange contrast between that cheerful chamber and its occupant. Every thing around denoted quiet, comfort,

and glad and innocent tastes: the walls were of white wainscot, and hung with drawings; book-shelves fastened with rose-coloured riband, and in two recesses were stands of old china, where shepherds, shepherdesses, and sheep, predominated. An open spinnet was in one corner, and in the other an embroidery frame, whose half-finished flowers spoke of recent employment. In each of the windows was a beaupot, and the roses were fresh, as if still on their native bough; and in one of the window-seats was a volume of Sir Philip Sydney's "Arcadia:" a few myrtle-leaves were scattered on the yet unclosed page, a graceful mark to find the place where the youthful reader had brooded over visions of truth and love, already vanished, like the freshness of those leaves, strewed, as if they were flung on the shroud of departed hope.

The casements were open, and looked on one of the fairest aspects of the garden: and the murmur of branches brought a sense of repose, and a faint perfume that grew every moment sweeter. The sun had set, and a soft purple haze clothed the distance; but a few rosy tints yet floated on the horizon, far from the colourless moon, whose pale crescent, pure and lucid as pearl, had just arisen: one single star was on the sky, tremulous and clear, belonging to other worlds—ah, surely, less troubled than ours! It rose just above where Ethel was sleeping, the only agitated thing in all that fair and calm scene: she lay with her head on her arm, and tears

> Seemed but the natural melting of its snow,

as the flushed cheek pressed upon it. Her long bright tresses had escaped from all confinement, and lay around her in rich confused masses, but giving that air of desolation which nothing marks in a woman so strongly as her neglected hair. Her eyes were closed, but the soft eyelids were swelled and red, and the eyelashes yet glittered with tears; a spot of burning red was on either cheek, but the rest of the face was pale; and, even in slumber, the muscles of the mouth quivered. Her breathing was difficult—how unlike its usual hushed and regular sweetness—while every now and then her whole frame was shaken by a quick convulsive sob. Terrible, indeed, is such sleep; but more terrible its awaking. At first we rouse forgetful; but conscious of something, we know not what. The head is raised with a sudden start, only to drop heavily on the pillow from whence rest is banished in an instant. The eyes close again, but not to sleep; we seek only to shut out the light from which we sicken. But the inward sorrow rises only the

more distinct: all is remembered, not a pang is spared; and the very rest given to the body only renders its sense of suffering more acute. Misery has many bitter moments; but, I believe, the first awakening after any great sorrow is the one of its most utter agony. How will it ever be possible to get through the long, the coming day? I envy those who have never asked the question.

CHAPTER XXXV.

AN EVENING ALONE.

The steps of Fate are dark and terrible;
And not here may we trace them to the goal.
 If I could doubt the heaven in which I hope,
The doubt would vanish, gazing upon life,
And seeing what it needs of peace and rest.
 Life is but like a journey during night.
We toil through gloomy paths of the unknown;
Heavy the footsteps are with pitfalls round;
And few and faint the stars that guide our way;
But, at last, comes morning; glorious
Shines forth the light of day, and so will shine
The heaven which is our future and our home.

Sir Jasper watched from his window the light form of Ethel, as she ran hastily along the little winding path, soon lost in the coppice beside. "Poor child!" muttered he, resuming his seat, and gazing on the wood embers, whose flames were gathering into all sorts of fantastic shapes, which only ask the imagination to give them what form it will. I marvel at none of the wild beliefs in the Hartz mountains: fire is the element of the spiritual, and who can tell what strange visitings there may be during the midnight hours that the charcoal-burner sits watching the fitful and subtle mystery of flame?

Sir Jasper gazed on these grotesque combinations till their shadows seemed almost palpable upon his wearied spirits. He felt himself growing fanciful and superstitious; a pale, sad face, wearing first the likeness of Ethel, and then changing to that of Henrietta, but fixed and distorted, appeared distinct in the obscurity. The large eyes sought his own, as if asking for help, and yet unable to do more than look their mute asking. Fu-

neral pageants floated on the air, dark, vague, but terrible, with that white face predominant in all.

Sir Jasper started from his chair, ashamed of the sick fancies that had, for the moment, overmastered him. He approached the window to dissipate them in the fair face of heaven; the evening had closed in during his revery, and the sweet and silver night had stolen, with her noiseless steps, upon the air. The scene was usually bare and desolate, but it was now softened by the united influence of summer and of moonlight. There was not a cloud on the sky, save a few light vapours that congregated near the moon; but even they were lustrous with her presence. The herbage shone with silver dews, like a sheet of water tremulous with the passing wind, and not a leaf on the surrounding trees, but seemed the mirror of a ray; all around was silent as sleep, and as soft. It seemed a world on which shadow had never rested, and tumult had never disturbed; crime, rage, and grief, had no part in elements so lovingly blended; the earth was at rest, and the still bright air slept on her bosom.

But there was something in the tranquillity that mocked Sir Jasper's unrest: the contrast was too forcible between the outward and inward world: the one so serene, so spiritual; the other so troubled, and so actual. He turned from the window; and, ringing the bell hastily, ordered the servants to close the curtains.

"If," muttered he to himself, "every place bore record of the wretchedness that they had witnessed, they could not thus mock us with their bright and serene aspect. Folly, of that dreaming creed of old, to believe that the calm, far stars, governed the base destinies of earth! But the world was young then—warm with the celestial fire that called it into being. Imagination walked its fresh paths even as a god, and shed around glorious beliefs and divine aspirings: its presence made beautiful the planet that it redeemed with its heavenly essence: but the imagination has exhausted its poetry; we are given over, worn out, and yet struggling to the cold and the real. We know more than we did, but we love less; and what knowledge is to be acquired on our weary soil but the knowledge of evil? I look around, and see nothing but suffering: mankind is divided into two classes, in which all alternately take their place—the tyrant and the victim. How we torture each other! Not content with our inevitable portion, with sickness, toil, and death, we must create and inflict sorrow!"

At this moment his eye fell upon some roses that Miss Churchill had brought him: in the confusion they had been thrown upon the floor, and trampled upon."

"Just emblems of herself, poor girl," said the kind old man: "a passing wind from the south, a transitory gleam of sunshine, and, lo! those flowers opened to their short and sweet existence! Now, there they lie, carelessly crushed; the little period allotted to their loveliness and fragrance recklessly shortened: and such is the history of that poor child. Her young heart has been awakened to its short summer of hope and love: and how dreary a winter remains behind! She has lost much more than her lover: she has lost confidence in affection, and belief in excellence. Alas for the heart which has surrendered itself to an idol unworthy of its faith!—it has no future.

"And yet," continued he, after a pause, "it matters little in what shape our sorrow overtakes us. In all this wide world there is nothing but suffering: the child cries in its cradle; it but begins as it will continue. In all ranks there is the same overpowering misery; the poor man has all the higher faculties of his being absorbed in a perpetual struggle with cold and hunger: a step higher, and pretence comes to aggravate poverty; dig we cannot, and to beg we are ashamed. Go on into what are called the higher classes, and there we find ambition the fever of the soul, and jealousy its canker. There are pleasures; but there is no relish for them; and luxuries which have become wearisome as wants. The feelings are either dull in selfish apathy, that excludes enjoyment; or unduly keen, till a look or word is torture. Then your philosophers, your poets, your men of science—what do they do but spend breathing and healthful life on wasting pursuits, in which the very success only shows how worthless it is to succeed? The mind feeds upon the body: pale sickness, and early decrepitude, overmaster even its spiritual essence. Too late it discovers that this earth is its prison, and not its home: the heart beats, and its pulses are the clockwork of wretchedness: the head examines only to find that all is void and worthless. We feel, and all we feel is misery; we know, and the whole of our knowledge is evil. In one thing has Fate been merciful,—it has placed at the end of our pilgrimage a grave."

Sir Jasper was right; in a few short years we learn that the "valley of the shadow of death" does but lead to a place of peace, "where the wicked cease from troubling, and the weary are at rest." Rest!—how strongly, day by day, does the desire for rest grow upon the human heart! We begin life—how buoy-

ant, how hopeful! difficulties but bring out a healthful exertion, and obstacles stimulate by the resources they call into action. This cannot, and does not last: it is not lassitude so much as discouragement that gains upon us: we feel how little we have done of all we once thought that we could do; and still more, how little that we have done has answered its intention. This I believe to be experienced in every career; but more especially in a literary one. Necessarily dependent on imagination, feeling, and opinion, of how exhausting a nature is both the work and the appeal of literature! Let the successful writer look back a few years, and what an utter sense of desolation there will be in the retrospect! Not a volume but has been the burial-place of many hopes, and the graven record of feelings never to be known again.

How constantly has mortification accompanied triumph! With what secret sorrow has that praise been received from strangers, denied to us by our friends! Nothing astonishes me more than the envy which attends literary fame, and the unkindly depreciation which waits upon the writer: of every species of fame, it is the most ideal and apart; it would seem to interfere with no one. It is bought by a life of labour; generally, also, of seclusion and privation. It asks its honour only from all that is most touching, and most elevated in humanity. What is the reward that it craves?—to lighten many a solitary hour, and to spiritualize a world, that were else too material. What is the requital that the Athenians of the earth give to those who have struggled through the stormy water, and the dark night, for their applause?—both reproach and scorn. If the author have—and why should he be exempt from?—the faults of his kind, with what greedy readiness are they seized upon and exaggerated! How ready is the sneer against his weakness or his error! What hours of feverish misery have been past! What bitter tears have been shed over the unjust censure, and the personal sarcasm!

The imaginative feel such wrong far beyond what those of less sensitive temperament can dream. The very essence of a poetical mind is irritable, passionate, and yet tender, susceptible and keenly alive to that opinion which is the element of its existence. These may be faults; but they are faults by which themselves suffer most, and without which they could not produce their creations. Can you bid the leopard leave his spots, and yet be beautiful?

Perhaps,—for the Divine purpose runs through every aim of our being,—the disappointment and the endurance are but sent to raise those hopes above, which else might cling too fondly to

their fruition below. Sooner or later dawns upon us the conviction, that the gifts we hold most glorious were given for a higher object than personal enjoyment, or the praise which is of man. We learn to look at the future result, to acknowledge our moral responsibility, and to hope that our thoughts, destined to become part of the human mind, will worthily fulfil the lofty duty assigned to their exercise.

I agree with Sir Jasper in looking forward with a desire that would fain "take the wings of the morning, and flee away, and be at rest." Worn, weary and discouraged, the image of death seems like a pleasant sleep—solemn, but soothing; when all that now makes the fevered heart beat with unquiet pain will be no more. But I, also, gaze beyond, in all the earnest humility of hope. I believe that the mind is imperishable; and is also the worthiest offering to the Creator. Whatever of thought, of feeling or of faculties, I may ever have possessed, look to the grave as to an altar, from whence they will arise purified and exalted unto heaven.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

THE CORONATION.

What memories haunt the venerable pile!
It is the mighty treasury of the past,
Where England garners up her glorious dead.
The ancient chivalry are sleeping there—
Men who sought out the Turk in Palestine,
And laid the crescent low before the cross.
The sea has sent her victories: those aisles
Wave with the banners of a thousand fights.
There, too, are the mind's triumphs—in those tombs
Sleep poets and philosophers, whose light
Is on the heaven of our intellect.
The very names inscribed on those old walls
Make the place sacred.

LADY MARCHMONT TO SIR JASPER MEREDITH.

I suppose, my dear uncle, that we shall all now come to our senses—that is, those who have any senses to which they could come—for the coronation is over. We have talked of nothing during the last six weeks, but ermine and purple velvet. The

day has been devoted to walking up and down the room, practising the stately pace with which we were to enter the abbey; and all night to dreaming that none looked so well as ourselves. Peers have been at a premium—that is the unmarried ones; not an heiress but would have waved settlements altogether for the sake of walking in the procession. I can assure you I felt quite glad that I was married—glad for the first and last time, *peut-être*.

Will you believe me, dearest uncle, when I say, that there are times when I could almost wish that I loved my husband? I often feel, in spite of the perpetual gayety in which I live, so lonely and so unvalued. One cannot always be amused, one would wish sometimes to be interested. How often have I feelings that crave for sympathy, and thoughts eager for communication! Lord Marchmont would enter as little into the feeling as he could understand the thought. Every day shows me more forcibly the narrowness of his mind, and the coldness of his heart. I do not believe that, in the whole course of his life, he had ever one lofty aspiration, or one warm and generous emotion. He is selfish, but it is selfishness on a singularly small scale: he is scarcely to be called ambitious; for his desires extend no further than a riband and a title—the wish to influence or to control his fellow-men by talent and by exertion, would never enter the vacant space called his mind. He loves money, because it is the only shape that power takes, which he can comprehend. Moreover, he delights in its small miserable enjoyments; he likes a fine house, fine dresses, and fine dinners; they are the material pleasures of which alone he is capable.

I am like a plant brought from the kind and genial air of your affection, into a cold and bright atmosphere—a frosty day in winter is for ever around me; while the chill hardens my nature, and I shall soon become a very icicle. What would Lord Marchmont do with the passionate and devoted love, that is in my heart? Well, better that it should there waste itself away in unbroken slumber, than waken into the bitter and burning life which is its inevitable heritage. I do not forget your lessons. What has love been to our gentle Ethel? But, how I have wandered from my subject! At all events the external world is bright enough; and why should we gaze on the dark and troubled depths of that which is within?

The spectacle was magnificent—worthy of the history that I recalled. As I looked round the noble old abbey—the most glorious tomb in which ever were enshrined the honours of the

past—I marvelled at the indifference with which the ordinary hours of life treat all that makes its greatness and its poetry. I could not believe that I had never had the resolution to see our most beautiful and most national building before.

It was a strange inconsistency, but never till then had I been so much struck with the worthless and frivolous life of society. Never till then did I feel the deep and eternal debt of gratitude that human nature owes to those who assert its higher influence; who feel their generous activity stirred by a thrice noble emulation; who appeal from the present to the future, and redeem their kind, by showing of how much that is good and great ambition and genius are capable. But, I am wandering again, —perhaps from very consciousness that I can give you no idea of the splendid scene, which yet floats before my eyes. No person can have a greater respect for words than myself; they can do every thing but what is impossible: and there is an extraordinary excitement in a crowd, which lives in no description that I ever yet read. It is strange the influence we exercise over each other. What is tame and cold with the few, becomes passion shared with the many.

When "God save the King!" resounded through the stately abbey, the banners vibrating with the mighty music, I felt quite enthusiastic in my loyalty. I hear that the procession of the peeresses, as each after each stepped through the arch, was quite charming. We ourselves knew the least about it; for we were too much taken up with our own appearance to think about others. After myself, to whom, of course, in my secret heart, I gave the first vote,—the beauties of the day were the Duchess of Queensberry and Lady Mary Wortley Montague. It is, after all, full dress that is the test of the gentlewoman. Common people are frightened at an unusual toilet: they think that finer clothes deserve finer manners, forgetting that any manner, to be good, must be that of every day.

But you should have seen my beauties,—so stately, yet so easy, as if the ermine mantle were familiar as the white and spreading wings are to the swan. Then the fine features were lighted up with a consciousness of looking well, which is one of beauty's most becoming moods. The Duchess of Queensberry is accustomed to that grace with which poetry invests flattery; but she is fitted to inspire it. Odd, very often rude, setting all common rules at defiance, I yet like her better than most of those with whom I come in contact. The fact is, she is more sincere. Now, let us alter and improve as much as we

can; yet nature will have what nothing else can, a hold upon the heart. You will think that I am grown "philosophical, very;" but the fact is, I am quite worn out with yesterday's fatigue. I can do nothing but lie on the couch and write to you. I always grow thoughtful when I am very tired.

We are going next week to a *fête* at Marble Hill, which is given to their majesties by Mrs. Howard. I am very desirous of going, not for the sake of the *fête*, for I am already beginning to look with an elegant indifference on pleasure; but I want to see the bride. Mr. and Mrs. Norbourne Courtenaye will then make their first appearance in public. The seclusion has been very long of their honeymoon; I wonder there was no wish for display before, as the bride is one of our richest heiresses. Norbourne has only changed suit, and taken the queen of diamonds instead of hearts. I hear that the lady is both ugly and deformed. I wish I could prevail on Ethel to come up to London, if it were but for the sake of eclipsing her rival. I will stand godmother to the town's admiration, and promise and vow three things in its name:—first, that she will forget her faithless swain in the multitude of new ones; secondly, that she will be universally run after; and, thirdly, that she will be brilliantly married.

And now adieu, dearest uncle, my eyes are closing with a rich confusion of banners, velvet and jewels. I must go to sleep for a while, and dream of them.

Your affectionate

HENRIETTA.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

PUBLISHING.

Life's smallest miseries are, perhaps, its worst:
Great sufferings have great strength: there is a pride
In the bold energy that braves the worst,
And bears proud in the bearing; but the heart
Consumes with those small sorrows, and small shames,
Which crave, yet cannot ask for sympathy.
They blush that they exist, and yet how keen
The pang that they inflict!

IT was one of those bright days in spring, which are very spendthrifts of sunshine, when the darkest alley in London wins a golden glimpse, and the eternal mist around St. Paul's turns

to a glittering haze: but the young man who was hurrying along some of the crowded streets, seemed insensible of the genial atmosphere; he would have been equally insensible of the reverse.

Walter Maynard, for he was the hurried walker, appeared much changed; he was thin and pale, and his cheek had that worn look which tells of bodily suffering. His dress was shabby, and arranged with little of his former attention to appearance: the eyes were larger and darker than of old, while there was an unnatural lustre, which bespoke both mental and physical fever. As he passed along, nothing seemed to catch his glance. He hurried on; and yet, more than once, he came to almost a full stop, as if reluctant, although impatient.

It was with slow and languid steps that, at last, he entered a bookseller's shop: he gave in his name, and the young man, behind the counter, very civilly asked him to wait. He sat down, and mechanically turned over some volumes that lay beside him; but their contents swam before him. The lover may tremble while waiting for the mistress on whose lip hangs the heart's doom, but I doubt whether he feels equal anxiety with the young author waiting the fiat of his publisher. One figure after another emerged from the room behind, and at each step Walter Maynard felt a cold shudder steal over him; and then he started and coloured, lest his agitation should have been observed; but the shop-boy was too used to such scenes to heed them. He never looked at the white lip, tremulous with hope, which was rather fear; he noticed not the drops that started on the forehead; what little attention he could spare from his business was given to the window; there, at least, he had the satisfaction of seeing the people passing. At last Walter Maynard's turn came: he entered a low, dark back-parlour, whose close and murky atmosphere seemed ominous; a little man was seated on a very high stool, writing at a desk before him.

"Take a seat, Mr. Maynard," said he, in a low mysterious whisper, as if the fate of nations depended on not being overheard. He went on writing, and Walter took his seat, glad of even a momentary respite.

Curl was of very small stature, with good but restless features, and a singularly undecided mouth. He might have sat for a personification of fear: if he moved he seemed rather afraid of his own shadow following him too closely; if he laughed, he soon checked himself, quite alarmed at the sound. He began a conversation at your elbow; but, before it was finished, he had gradually backed his chair to the other end of the room. He always contrived to sit next the door, to which

he paid more attention than to his hearer; his eye always wandering to it as if he meditated an escape, and yet this man was the most audacious libeller of his time. Reputation, feelings, or even chastisement, were as nothing in the balance weighed against his interest; life was to him only a long sum; his ledger was his Bible, and his religion, profit. For a little while he went on writing: this he did on principle.

"Authors," he was wont to say, "come in a direct line from Reuben; they are unstable as water, and never know exactly what it is they really do want. I always give them a little waiting, just to show I don't care much about them, and so grow something rational in their demands."

At last Curl descended from his stool, and drew a chair towards Walter. Dividing his looks between him and the door, he began:—

"I have been looking at your pamphlet, and showing it, but I mention no names. I don't see the use of names, for my part, unless it be to put in asterisks. It is—yes—very, indeed."

"What!" exclaimed Walter.

"Yes, extremely so," replied Curl.

"You think it, then, clever," returned the anxious listener.

"Why, my good young friend," exclaimed the publisher, glancing suspiciously at the door, "you would not have me tell an author to his face that his works were not clever? You are too irritable a race for that!"

"But do you think that it will suit you?" asked Maynard.

"Why, no—no—yes, perhaps; but we must talk a little about it. You reason too much; all young people are so fond of reasons, as if reasons were of any use."

"Why," cried his companion, "mine is a dispassionate appeal to the reason of the public: my object is to convince."

"As if you ever convinced people by reason!"

"But I feel it is a duty I owe to the public," said the author.

"Good Lord! oh, Lord! Why, my dear sir, what duty do you owe to the public? The only duty you owe is to me, your publisher! It is your duty to write what will sell, and I tell you reasons are unmarketable commodities."

"What would you have me do?" sighed Maynard, in a desponding tone.

"Why, pepper and salt your reasons!" cried Curl, forgetting to look at the door for a moment: "your pamphlet has talent: but talent is like a cucumber, nothing without the dressing. You must be more personal."

"I detest personalities," said Walter.

"And I detest nonsense," said the other; "and I also detest works that won't sell. You mean to make scribbling your business?"

"I am," replied our young poet, "anxious to devote my feeble services to the cause of literature."

"A very well turned sentence," said the bookseller: "I don't, myself, dislike a fine phrase now and then; but fine words, like fine clothes, don't do to wear every day: you would soon find yourself without any to wear."

"Very true," thought Maynard, glancing unconsciously at his own threadbare apparel.

"Now, my dear young friend," continued the bookseller, "you seem fond of reason; let me talk a little reason to you. Here, take your pamphlet again: there is good material in it, but it requires the making up. Leave out some of your arguments, and throw in a few sentiments,—something about free-born Britons and wooden shoes! Englishmen like to have a few sentiments ready for after-dinner use, in case of a speech. You must, also, add a dozen or so sarcasms, and say a little more about bribery and corruption. Above all, be sure that your jokes are obvious ones, and I know the thing will be a hit!"

Walter took up his manuscript with an embarrassed and mortified air. He had written with all the enthusiasm of a patriot of one-and-twenty, who believes, and who hopes; suddenly, his high profession of faith, his earnest appeal to the noblest principles, was changed into a mere question of business. Moreover, in his secret soul he despised the plan proposed; but what could he do? his forlorn garret rose visibly before him, he could not even pay its rent for the coming week. It was the first conflict between the expedient and the ideal. For the first time, a bitter sense of how little consequence his speculative opinions could possibly be, rushed across him, and he held his papers with a hesitating grasp. Curl's quick eye caught the struggle which he yet affected not to notice.

"I must have the pamphlet by the day after to-morrow," said he, as if considering the affair altogether settled; "and to show you that I have a good hope of its success, here—here are ten guineas for you!" and he counted the money out upon the table.

There was something in the ring of the coin that jarred upon Walter's ear; he was ashamed of being paid,—a false shame, and yet how natural to one both proud and sensitive!

"Time enough," said he, colouring, "to pay me when my work is done."

"No, no!" interrupted Curl, "it will encourage you as a beginner. If you were an old hand at this sort of work, I could not trust you; you would spend the money, and I should see you and your pamphlet no more; but you young ones are so eager to see yourselves in print!"

"In print!" there was a charm in that phrase that decided Walter. He took up the papers, and assured Curl that he should have sentiment and sarcasm enough by the following night.

"Good Lord!—oh, Lord!" cried the astonished publisher: "you are a young hand at your work. Why, you are walking off, and have left your money behind you!"

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

ALTERATION.

My heart hath turned aside,
From its early dreams;
To me their course has been
Like mountain streams.

Bright and pure they left
Their place of birth;
Soon on every wave
Came taints of earth.

Weeds grew upon the banks,
And, as the waters swept,
A bad or useless part
Of all they kept.

Till it reached the plains below,
An altered thing,
Bearing gloomy trace,—
Of its wandering.

Walter again pursued his way, lost in a very mixed reverie; sometimes writhing under an idea of degradation, in thus making a trade of his talents; and then, again, somewhat consoled by the pride of art; for how many felicitous and stinging epigrams arose in his mind! "It is," thought he, "a political

warfare that I am carrying on, and ridicule is as good a weapon as any other."

Lost in meditated satire, he arrived at the shop of Mr. Lintot. It was larger, cleaner, and lighter, than the one that he had just left, and a strong smell of roast meat came from the regions below. He was not kept waiting an instant: "Mr. Lintot is expecting you," said the shopboy, who looked just fresh from the country; and he was shown into his room. It was wonderfully airy for that part of town; and two nicely clean windows, with flowerpots on the sill, looked into a garden: at one of these was seated Mr. Lintot. Like all cockneys, he had rural tastes; and he always intended, when he had made a certain sum, that he would buy a small farm, and live in the country. He never, however, even to himself, specified what the sum was to be.

Mr. Lintot was a large, and rather good-looking man—what would be called comfortable-looking, in his appearance. He had a large arm-chair, and his very substantial raiment did not appear at all likely to inconvenience him by any restraining tightness. He obviously liked being at his ease: as to meaning, his face had as little as a face could possibly have. It was not till animated by some discussion, based upon the multiplication table, that you saw how keen and shrewd those large, dull, gray eyes could become. His welcome to his visiter was more than friendly—it was paternal: he shook him by both hands, and asked so anxiously how the air of London agreed with him.

"Terrible fog, sir!—terrible fog! You did not write your pastoral poems here? Very pretty they are: I wish every body had my taste for green fields and sheep, poetry would sell then!"

"One portion of my volume, at all events, finds favour with you?" said Walter, very much encouraged by his reception.

"The whole, sir—the whole! It is a charming volume; the love verses, too,—pity that people don't care about love; nobody's in love nowadays!"

"But what do you say to the satires?" asked the author, not quite so elated.

"Dangerous things, sir—dangerous things!" exclaimed Mr. Lintot, drawing a deep breath of air from the open window: "do you know, sir, Curl published a lampoon on Lord Hervey the other day, who said that he would have horse-whipped him if he could have found his way into the city. Only think, sir, of horse-whipping a publisher!" and Mr. Lintot grew pale with excess of horror.

"To think of only horse-whipping one," muttered Walter to

himself; and then added aloud, "but there is nothing personal in my satire."

"So much the worse!" exclaimed Mr. Lintot: "what is the use of denouncing a vice?—denounce the individual! What woman thanks you for a compliment addressed to the sex in general? No, no, pay one to herself! And the same with sneers; always take care that your sneer suits some well-known individual; all his friends will have such pleasure in applying it; and you know, sir, our object is to give as much satisfaction as we can to the public."

"And now, do you think," asked Walter, "that the volume I left with you is likely to give satisfaction?"

"It is a charming book—very charming book! and I see that you are a clever young man. You were punctual to your appointment: punctuality is the first of virtues, and a sign of pretty behaviour in a young man. I forcsee that you will succeed!"

"But about my volume of poems?" interrupted its author.

"Why, sir, it is hard to say," replied the cautious publisher: "poetry is not worth much at present; indeed, I never heard that it was. Homer begged his bread: you will excuse my little joke!"

"I am to understand, then," replied Maynard, "that it does not suit you?"

"Never draw a hasty conclusion," answered Mr. Lintot; "I mean to do my best for you!"

"Do you mean to publish my poems?" cried Walter.

"Why, you see, sir, the times are bad, and I am no speculator. I have a wife and family, and a man with a wife and family must be just before he is generous. Besides, my two youngest children have just had the hooping-cough, and they must have a little country air: all these things are expensive. I appeal to your feelings, sir, whether you would drive a hard bargain with a man in my situation?"

"I leave it entirely to yourself," replied Maynard, despondingly.

"Sir, I will run the risk of publishing your volume. Paper and printing are terrible things; I wish books could do without them: But I will venture. I heard you highly spoken of yesterday: we will share what profits there are, and your list of subscribers will ensure us against loss."

It did far more, by-the-by, to say nothing of Sir Jasper Meredith's secret guarantee.

"And now business being over," said Lintot, "will you dine

with me? I am a plain man, only a joint and a pudding, which is just ready: I like to encourage young men in being punctual."

Walter declined the invitation, precisely because he wanted a dinner. He was, also, conscious that he had made a very bad bargain; but how could he chaffer and dispute about things so precious as the contents of those pages which were the very outpourings of his heart? There were recorded dreams glorious with the future, and feelings soft and musical with the past. He fancied Ethel Churchill's soft blue eyes filled with tears, as she turned the haunted leaves of which she had been the inspiration, and he was consoled for every mortification. He walked along those crowded streets alive but to one delicious hope; and amid poverty, labour, and discouragement, still steeped to the lip in poetry.

The fanciful fables of fairy land are but allegories of the young poet's mind when the sweet spell is upon him. Some slight thing calls up the visionary world, and all the outward and actual is for the time forgotten. It is ethereal and lovely; but, like all other fevers, leaving behind weakness and exhaustion. I believe there is nothing that causes so strong a sensation of physical fatigue as the exercise of the imagination. The pulses beat too rapidly; and how cold, how depressed, is the reaction!

CHAPTER XXXIX.

THE FETE.

Many were lovely there; but of that many,
Was one who look'd the loveliest of any—
The youthful countess. On her cheek the dies
Were crimson with the morning's exercise;
The laugh upon her full red lip yet hung;
And, arrow-like, light words flash'd from her tongue.
She had more loveliness than beauty—hers
Was that enchantment which the heart confers.
A mouth, sweet from its smiles; a large dark eye,
That had o'er all expression mastery,
Laughing the orb, but yet the long lash made
Somewhat of sadness with its twilight shade;
And suiting well the upcast look that seemed,
At times, as it of melancholy dreamed:
Her cheek was as a rainbow, it so changed,
As each emotion o'er its surface ranged—
Her face was full of feeling.

MRS. HOWARD'S *fête* at Marble Hill more than realised all

expectations. The very spring put itself forward to please her; or, rather, borrowed a day from summer. The king and queen were in the last extremities of royal condescension. It was enough to make domestic felicity the fashion from one end of the British empire to the other, just to see the august couple walking arm in arm through the gardens; Mrs. Howard a little in advance, pointing out the beauties, and the favourites of the suite close behind. The king was fond of walking; and it is a singular instance of that feminine courage, endurance, how the queen contrived, subject as she was to the gout, to accompany him.

Queen Caroline must have been a very handsome woman; her eyes were still fine, and her smile peculiarly sweet. No one understood the science of temporizing better than she did, or of

"If she rule him, not to show she rules."

Give a strong mind the advantage of habit, and its dominion over the weak one is absolute. It is a strong proof of Sir Robert Walpole's sagacity, that he never for a moment mistook the real source of power. Others might court the royal Favourite; he saw at once that Mrs. Howard was but the shadow flung, by the queen's own good pleasure, before her. There can be no doubt but that Queen Caroline secretly enjoyed the knowledge of her influence. To a strong-minded woman, shut out from the natural sphere of the affections, what remains but the enjoyment of consciousness of power?

Amid the brilliant crowd, that gathered on the lawns, or loitered through the saloons, no one looked more lovely than Lady Marchmont; and it was obvious, that she enjoyed the homage by which she was surrounded. Tired of seeing one cavalier desert her after another, Lady Mary Wortley Montague joined the gay circle, of which her brilliant rival was the centre. By so doing, it also appeared her own—at least she was where all assembled; none could say that she was deserted.

"What a change!" exclaimed she, glancing round the room, —"since Mrs. Howard was obliged to cut off her beautiful hair, and sell it, in order to pay for her own and her husband's dinner."

"What a dreadful sacrifice!" exclaimed Lady Marchmont, with mock-tragedy air—"Though, as Chloe would say, it was devoted to the noblest duty of humanity."

"It is a pity, Lady Mary, that Pope now 'disdains the shrine he once adored,'" said Lord Hervey, "or what a subject you

might suggest to him in the locks of the modern Berenice. But I believe 'Sappho's eye, quick glancing round the park,' has lost its ancient influence."

"I am glad to find," retorted her ladyship, annoyed at his allusion to lines any thing but complimentary, and too well known to need more than allusion,—"I am glad to find that Lord Harvey has, at length, found a virtue to suit him," retorted Lady Mary; "there is candour, at least, in borrowing from the wit of others, it frankly admits that we have none of our own."

"It is, then, a virtue," said Lady Marchmont, good naturedly, "that we are all likely to practise in your presence. But I go a step beyond; I candidly admit, instead of borrowing, I would very gladly steal your wit."

"Ah!" whispered Lord Harvey, "Lady Marchmont is resolved that her very sins should be innocent. Now that she has begun to covet, it is something not worth having."

"Are you talking," interrupted Lady Mary, "of Lord Harvey's head or heart? as I hear you speaking of things not worth having."

At this juncture, their attention was attracted to a lady who passed finely, rather than richly dressed.

"What a splendid pair of ear-rings!" exclaimed Lady Marchmont.

"Well, really," said Lord Harvey, "Lady S.'s conduct is too audacious. Why, every body knows those ear-rings were given her by that man for whom she procured the place in the Custom-house, through the queen's interest.

"Well," replied Lady Mary, "who is to know where good wine is sold, unless you hang out the bush."

"The announcement that the banqueting-room was thrown open, occasioned a general rush. Lady Marchmont had not yet attained that elegant audacity which forces its way through trains, ruffles, elbows, &c.; and, with the exception of Lord Harvey, who was handing her forward, she completely lost her party. Her attention was engrossed by a young female, who, only accompanied by an elderly gentleman, was quite incapable of either advancing, or even extricating herself from the crowd. Henrietta saw at once that the youthful stranger was unaccustomed to such a scene, and that he was even more embarrassed than fatigued. They were so close that they touched each other, till the lady leant for support against Lady Marchmont. It was but for a moment; and, recovering herself, she apologized in a voice so sweet, and so timid, that Henrietta felt a

sudden and voluntary interest,—one of those attractions for which we can as little account as we can resist. She drew the arm of the trembling girl within her own, and said,—"Suppose we try and make way to the window, we can sit there; and I dare say that you care as little for the banquet as I do."

They easily reached the window, to the no small joy of the elderly gentleman, who, now that he was rid of his troublesome charge, thought that he himself could reach the royal presence; and to lose his chance of a smile from the king or queen was a dreadful thing. Lord Harvey, after seeing them securely seated, volunteered his services in procuring some sort of refreshment, so that Lady Marchmont was left alone with her new acquaintance. She was scarcely pretty, but looked so young, so delicate, and the soft colour came and went in her cheek with such sweet shyness, that Henrietta found herself every moment more and more interested. At first she had great difficulty in bringing about a conversation, the stranger was ignorant of the topics of the day, and very timid. But Lady Marchmont had a fascination about her it was impossible to resist, and they soon began talking with both ease and pleasure. Suddenly the stranger broke off abruptly in what she was saying, her eyes grew almost brilliant with delight, and a rich crimson animated her whole countenance.

"There is my husband!" exclaimed she, in a voice trembling with emotion.

Lady Marchmont was astonished that one so young and so shy should be married; but she was still more astonished when she saw her husband—it was Norbourne Courtenaye.

CHAPTER XL.

THE FIRST DOUBT.

Youth, love, and rank, and wealth—all these combined,
Can these be wretched? Mystery of the mind,
Whose happiness is in itself; but still
Has not that happiness at its own will.
She felt too wretched with the sudden fear—
Had she such lovely rival and so near?
Ay, bitterest of the bitter this worst pain,
To know love's offering has been in vain;
Rejected, scorn'd, and trampled under foot,
Its bloom and leaves destroyed, but not its root.

> "He loves me not!"—no other words nor sound
> An echo in the lady's bosom found:
> It was a wretchedness too great to bear,
> She sank before the presence of despair!

Mr. Courtenaye was accompanied by his uncle, whom business had detained till this late hour in town. Henrietta knew and liked Lord Norbourne, but now she had only just sufficient self-control to receive his greeting with due politeness. Mrs. Courtenaye having no feeling but that of gratitude for Henrietta's kindness, was eager to express it.

"I am so glad you know her!" whispered she to her father: "do thank her for me."

"My little rustic," said Lord Norbourne, "is most fortunate. Will Lady Marchmont allow her the honour of a farther acquaintance? Permit me to present my daughter, Mrs. Courtenaye."

"And my husband," said Constance, timidly.

"I have already the honour or Mr. Courtenaye's acquaintance," replied Lady Marchmont, with a coldness that she did not even attempt to conceal; for the image of Ethel—pale, sad, and wasting her youth in unavailing regret—arose too distinctly before her; and if it was present to her, how forcibly did she not recall it to Norbourne Courtenaye.

Ethel, his still too much beloved Ethel, seemed actually present. What, at that moment, were her feelings? Did she hate, did she despise him? Was she—but that he shuddered to contemplate!—was she unhappy? How he longed to ask Lady Marchmont about her: though deeply mortified at the cold manner in which she received him, it showed plainly enough what was her opinion of his conduct. Lord Norbourne saw that there was something wrong, though even his penetration was at a loss to divine what; and he therefore exerted himself to talk it away. In this he was seconded by Lady Marchmont; and, between them, the conversation was sufficiently sustained.

Constance, encouraged by the presence of her father and husband, and shut out from the crowd, felt less timid than usual; still she could not but perceive that Norbourne's manner lacked its ordinary grace in speaking to her new friend; and yet she had never felt so anxious that he should please. Taking her earliest opportunity, she whispered,

"Only think, Norbourne, of your knowing Lady Marchmont! do talk to her; she is so kind, so charming."

But her words fell on unheeded ears. Courtenaye's thoughts,

were far away; and Constance, shrinking into herself at the least repulse, did not attempt to speak to him again.

There is nothing in this world so sensitive as affection. It feels its own happiness too much not to tremble for its reality; and starts, ever and anon, from its own delicious consciousness, to ask, Is it not, indeed, a dream? A word and a look are enough either to repress or to encourage. Nothing is a trifle in love, for all is seen through an exaggerated medium; and Constance's attachment to her husband was of the most imaginative order—shy, fearful, little demonstrative, but how utterly devoted! It never came into her head to blame Norbourne for any thing. She did not even venture on making excuses for him: all he did appeared best, and most natural to do. She took it for granted that he was pre-occupied; and, after a moment or two of disappointment, she resumed her own peculiarly sweet and pleasing smile, a smile that seemed to implore your kindness. Indeed, almost her whole attention was soon engrossed by her brilliant companion, whose circle was increased by some three or four friends, who had but just discovered her. Till then she had never formed an idea of one so gifted and so charming. She listened with astonishment to her companion's gay sallies, and answers, as piquant as they were ready. She was astonished that any one could talk so easily to her father, that father to whom she never spoke without awe; and gazed, with enthusiastic admiration, on the beautiful face, which gave every word and smile such a charm. Such is the power of novelty, that Lady Marchmont was more flattered at the impression she produced on the unpractised stranger, than with all the homage of the courtly train that followed her.

Constance felt too pleased and too much excited for her usual silence; and she took the opportunity of the first pause in conversation to whisper to Lady Marchmont,—"How happy Norbourne is to have the pleasure of knowing you! Has he known you long? I wonder that he never talked about you!"

"Happy!" replied Henrietta, with a sneer, a little more marked than she meant it to be. "I knew him before his marriage in the country." Then, turning to Lord Norbourne, added,—"It is odd how much older one grows in London than any where else. I was going to have said, years ago."

It is a strange thing, the instinct of jealousy in a woman; a sudden light seemed to burst in upon Constance. Lady Marchmont's coldness, Norbourne's embarrassments and coldness, led alike to one terrible conclusion. They had met before his marriage; and surely to meet Lady Marchmont must

have been to love her. A mist gathered over her eyes; she felt cold and giddy. Scarcely conscious, she strove to reach her father, and fainted away in his arms!

Poor Constance was carried to a room in the house; and when, at length, she recovered, she was glad to accede to her husband's wish of leaving the *fête*. Norbourne was almost thankful for any excuse that enabled him to avoid seeing Lady Marchmont. In vain he sought to rally his spirits, and to conceal his depression; but the idea of Ethel mocked his efforts to forget. He remembered her solitary life, and with what delight he had once thought on her first introduction into society. Now he was joining in all its gayeties, and where was she? Still in the same seclusion, with nothing to disturb one sad remembrance: she was lonely; he dared not add, even to himself, wretched.

CHAPTER XLI.

GAYETIES AND ABSURDITIES.

LADY MARCHMONT TO SIR JASPER MEREDITH.

What Shakspeare said of lovers, might apply
To all the world—"'Tis well they do not see
The pretty follies that themselves commit."
Could we but turn upon ourselves the eyes
With which we look on others, life would pass
In one perpetual blush and smile.
The smile, how bitter!—for 'tis scorn's worst task
To scorn ourselves; and yet we could not choose
But mock our actions, all we say or do,
If we but saw them as we others see.
Life's best repose is blindness to itself.

My dearest Uncle,—So, at last, I have met poor Ethel's rival; and, as is always the case when one forms an idea to one's self, she is as different as possible from what I anticipated. Pale, and delicate almost to prettiness, she is timid to a painful degree; and very much in love with her husband.

Mr. Courtenaye's embarrassment, on meeting me, was too much to conceal. Ethel was plainly in his thoughts; and, if it be any consolation to her, he looks very much altered and depressed. I suppose the family estate must have been heavily burdened; and, between pride and poverty, love quitted the

field, banished, if not subdued. I have seen him once or twice since, either in low or highly excited spirits. I have not met Mrs. Courtenaye again; for, twice that I called, she was too ill to see me, and she appears in public but little, owing to her health.

We go next week on a visit to Cliveden, so that I am not likely to see any thing more of them for some time; and yet I cannot help being interested in her. On my return, my first visit shall be to her.

Lady Orkney's history, to whose house we are going, is a curious one. As Miss Elizabeth Villiers, by her charms she pierced the cuirass that enveloped the well-disciplined heart of William III. But the conquest over his affection was not half so extraordinary as the conquest over his economy: he actually conferred upon her all the private estates in Ireland of his father-in-law, King James, worth some five-and-twenty thousand a-year. This magnificent donation had, however, a most curious drawback. Out of the proceeds were to be paid two annuities; one to Lady Susan Bellasye, and one to Mrs. Godfrey, both mistresses to the former monarch. It seems to me a most practical piece of sarcasm. However, parliament interfered, and an act was passed, resuming all grants since the Revolution. Her royal and careful lover nevertheless found some other substantial method of showing his favour; for the lady was very rich when she married Lord George Hamilton, afterwards created Earl of Orkney.

I must say, that, at the coronation, there was little vestige left as possible "of the charms that pleased a king." "She looked," Lady Mary Wortley said, "like an Egyptian mummy, wrought with hieroglyphics of gold." Lady Orkney has the reputation of being very clever: I do not see much proof in a letter that she wrote to Mrs. Howard, on the occasion of the last *fête* at Clifden. It began thus:—"Madame, I give you this trouble out of the anguish of my mind." This anguish consists in some stools being placed instead of chairs, and Lord Grantham's directing that there should be two table-cloths instead of one; "which innovation," as she pathetically observes, "turned all the servants' heads." Moreover, "they kept back the dinner too long for her majesty after it was dished, and it was set before the fire." She winds up by saying—"I thought I had turned my mind in a philosophical way of having done with the world; but I find I have deceived myself." Poor Lady Orkney! it is just what we all do. However, I confess, the

fête appeared to me most splendid; and the royal guests as much pleased as the rest of the company.

The last *jeu d'ésprit* circulating among us, is "A Characteristic Catalogue of Pictures." Characteristic enough some of them certainly are! for Mr. Onslow has contributed "A Flower-Piece;" and, if ever man talked poppies and tulips, it is our worthy and flowery speaker. "A head Unfinished" is by Lord Townshend, of whom his colleague said, "that his brains wanted nothing but ballast!" Mr. Booth obliges us with "A mist." He ought to be able to paint it most accurately, for he always seems in one."

Next week we go to Lord Burlington, a nobleman to whose taste for building the world is indebted for one of its chief pleasures; namely, that of finding fault. Two noble friends dined with him in his new house in Piccadilly, and next day circulated the following epigram:—

> "Possessed of one great hall for state,
> Without a room to sleep or eat;
> How well you build, let flattery tell,
> And all the world, how ill you dwell."

We, however, are going to the villa at Chiswick, of which Dr. Arbuthnot says, that "it is fitted up with a cold in every corner, and a consumption by way of perspective." Lord Harvey's remark is, that "it is too small to live in, and too large to hang to one's watch!"

I must leave off abruptly, for I hear the carriage announced; and Lord Marchmontt as much objects to being kept waiting as if his time were of the least value.

Ever your most affectionate child,

HENRIETTA.

CHAPTER XLII.

AN ALLUSION TO THE PAST.

> Ah! there are memories that will not vanish;
> Thoughts of the past we have no power to banish;
> To show the heart how powerless mere will,
> For we may suffer, and yet struggle still.
> It is not at our choice that we forget,
> That is a power no science teaches yet:
> The heart may be a dark and closed up tomb;
> But memory stands a ghost amid the gloom!

"I AM sorry," said Lord Norbourne, "that your protégé,

Walter Maynard, should be, what I suppose he would call, so patriotic. Young men think it such an easy thing to set the world to rights. Why do you not talk him into more rational notions?"

"Truly, my dear uncle," replied Courtenaye, "it is no such easy matter reasoning with one at once firm and enthusiastic in his opinions."

"Well, well!" replied his uncle, drawing his arm-chair closer to the hearth, and stirring the fire into a cheerful blaze. "Time does work wonderful changes, and in nothing so much as in opinion. In youth we encore the sentiment,

> "Oh, bless my country, Heaven! he said, and died;"

but, as we advance in life, we think,

> 'How weak it is to pity Cato's case,
> Who might have lived, and had a handsome place!'

"Your views of human nature are any thing but encouraging," exclaimed Norbourne.

"I have heard much," returned his companion, "of the beauty of truth; but it is a beauty no one likes to look upon. To find it out, is only to find that you have been duped in every possible manner; and to hear it, is only to have a friend give way to his temper, and say something disagreeable to you."

"But what," asked Courtenaye, "is to become of us, when the freshness of pleasure is gone with the freshness of youth, and one illusion has faded after another?"

"Why," replied Lord Norbourne, "there remain avarice and business. I exceedingly regret that I do not, cannot force myself to love money. It is the most secure source of enjoyment of which our nature is capable. It is tangible and present; it is subject to no imaginary miseries; it goes on increasing; it is a joy for ever. It exercises both bodily and mental faculties in its acquisition; it is satisfaction to the past, and encouragement to the future."

"For mercy's sake, stop!" cried Norbourne; "if you go on much further with this eulogium, you will send me away a confirmed miser."

"No such good luck," replied Lord Norbourne, smiling; "the miser, like the poet, must be born. It is not to be acquired without an original vocation. In the meantime, I advise you to amuse yourself as much as you can; and talking of amusement, do you go to Lady Marchmont's to-night?"

Courtenaye started at the name; and was too much absorbed in all it called up, to notice that his uncle's quick, dark eye was fixed on his face, with a glance that seemed desirous of reading his inmost thoughts.

"No," said he, "Constance did not seem well enough to go out; and, as I am not wanted, I mean to keep my promise with Walter Maynard, and accompany him to witness the fate of his new play, which comes out to-night."

"Constance has not been well," observed her father, "since the *fête* at Marble Hill: we must not let her go into scenes of such fatigue."

"And yet," said Norbourne, "it is a dull life she often leads. Why, my dear uncle, when I come home late I always find her up in the library, copying your letters—an example, I am sure, to your other secretaries."

"Constance is a creature only fitted to live in the quiet sphere of the affections. She is happier at home than in the midst of gayety, which is too much for her: but her recent indisposition seems to me rather in the mind."

The open and anxious manner in which Norbourne looked up, was sufficient answer; but having made the allusion, his uncle felt he was bound to proceed.

"I know I may speak to you, my dear child with perfect confidence; but I see clearly that Constance is suffering from an undefined jealousy of Lady Marchmont."

"Lady Marchmont!" exclaimed his nephew, with the most unfeigned surprise.

"Why, coupling your previous acquaintance with your obvious embarrassment at meeting, can you wonder that Constance should fear the renewed influence of one so beautiful, and so fascinating? All I know of Lady Marchmont is charming; but she likes admiration—who does not? and pique is an absolute passion with a woman. She may like to charm a truant lover, were it but to show him what he has lost."

"My dear uncle," replied Norbourne, after a pause of mingled embarrassment and emotion, "you are completely mistaken. I will tell you the whole truth, and then let the subject be dropped for ever. I was making a summer tour through our country last year, and called on a Mrs. Churchill, an old friend, and distant connexion of our family. I was received with great hospitality; and, liking the neighbourhood, accepted her invitation for a more lengthened visit. I soon lingered there from another motive. I became attached to her granddaughter; and Lady

Marchmont, just then married, was the intimate friend of Miss Churchill, and was aware of my affection even before its object. I left, bound by no engagement, as I wished to consult my mother. Lady Marchmont considers my conduct most unjust, what, alas! it was to Ethel—Miss Churchill, I mean,—and resents it for her friend's sake. I have made no inquiries—I never shall. The very sorrow I may have inflicted on one woman, will make me doubly anxious to guard it from another. The happiness of Constance is to me the most sacred thing in the world. What, in this case, would you advise me to do?"

Lord Norbourne was silent, for he was touched to the heart: at last his voice became sufficiently steady to reply. "To do nothing; leave it to Constance's own good sense to discover how groundless are her apprehensions. No good ever comes of speaking on such a subject. A woman always exaggerates to herself as she talks. Silence is the first step to forgetfulness. One word about Mrs. Churchill: I know that her name is down in Sir Robert's list of confirmed Jacobites. There is a suspicion of a correspondence carried on by her means with the Court of St. Germains. Whatever happens, she shall find a friend in me. Let me give you the satisfaction of contributing to her security."

Norbourne pressed his uncle's hand, and they parted in silence. The latter remained for a few minutes lost in thought.

"I did it for the best," exclaimed he, half aloud; "and, after all, what is love? I only hope that making an attachment an unhappy one, will not turn out the only receipt for securing its continuance."

He then drew towards the table, and was soon completely absorbed in the perusal of a memorial.

After all, there is nothing like business for enabling us to get through our weary existence. The intellect cannot sustain its sunshine flight long; the flagging wing drops to the earth. Pleasure palls, and idleness is

"Many gathered miseries in one name;"

but business gets over the hours without counting them. It may be very tired at the end, still it has brought the day to a close sooner than any thing else.

CHAPTER XLIII.

DOUBTS.

Ask me not, love, what may be in my heart
When, gazing on thee, sudden tear-drops start;
When only joy should come where'er thou art.

The human heart is compassed with fears;
And joy is tremulous, for it enspheres
An earth-born star, which melts away in tears.

I am too happy for a careless mirth—
Hence anxious thoughts, and sorrowful, have birth;
Who looks from heaven, is half returned to earth.

How powerless is my fond anxiety!
I feel I could lay down my life for thee,
Yet feel how vain such sacrifice might be.

Hence do I tremble in my happiness;
Hurried and dim the unknown hours press:
1 question of a past I dare not guess.

Lord Norbourne was right in supposing that the illness of his daughter arose from the mind, or rather from the heart. If any thing, she exaggerated her own deficiencies; the very intensity of her affection for her husband made her feel as if he deserved even her ideal of perfection. Her introduction into the world had brought its usual bitter fruit—experience. With all the simplicity of seclusion, and a neglected education, Constance had natural talents, and that fine sense which originates in fine feeling. She shrank from talking herself; but she listened with an attention the more keen, as it was undisturbed by most of the usual distractions. Chiefly accustomed to the society of her father and her husband, her mind, unconsciously both to herself and to them, was every day acquiring new powers, only restrained by her natural timid temper.

But was she happier for her knowledge? Alas, no! she learned to doubt and to fear. The sneers she now so often heard pointed at others, she took for granted would, also, not spare herself; and what effect might they not have on Norbourne? She had overheard more than one cruel sarcasm on her personal appearance; she heard beauty so vaunted, that it appeared to her necessary to Love.

Her delicate frame was utterly incapable of supporting the fatigue and late hours of the society in which she so suddenly found herself placed; and the exertion to please, and to appear pleased, produced that usual reaction which is so oppressive to the spirits. She had no female friend or relative in whom she could confide; and the greater portion of her time was necessarily passed alone. To catch the last sound of Norbourne's footstep; to spring forward delighted on his return; to watch his every look, and treasure every word; to surround him with a thousand tender cares which have only existence in feminine solicitude—so was her whole existence employed. She would have made any sacrifice to gratify even his slightest wish; or, rather, she would not have made any: for, nothing to her could have appeared a sacrifice, if for him.

Her husband was not—could any man be?—insensible to a devotion so meek and so entire. To hear her express a wish, and to gratify it, was the same thing. His kindness was almost womanly in its anxiety and delicacy; he gave up amusements and engagements, to sit, evening after evening, by her languid couch; but one thing was wanting—love alone can answer love; and, kind as he was, attentive as he was, the seeking heart of Constance pined with a perpetual want.

Her meeting with Lady Marchmont gave a sudden clue to an unhappiness, I should rather say a want of happiness, unacknowledged even to herself. A terrible fear, which, the more she thought it over, grew more like truth, took possession of her mind. Courtenaye had loved the brilliant stranger whom he now met with such obvious reluctance. What could have separated them? To Constance it appeared impossible that Courtenaye could ever have been rejected; but, whatever the cause had been, to her it mattered not: she looked only to the hopelessness of ever inspiring love in one who had loved Lady Marchmont. She tortured herself by recalling every word and look of her too gifted rival; she remembered her as she sat in the window-seat, gleams of sunshine reflected on her glossy black hair, black with that glancing purple bloom as it is only seen elsewhere in nature on the neck of the raven. The bright face, yet brighter with animation—Constance remembered its effect on herself, as well as the circle of which the lovely countess was the idol. She hid her face on her arm, as if by so doing she could shut out the image which pursued her. Just then Norbourne entered the chamber; and fancying from her attitude that his wife was asleep, he approached softly, and drew a large shawl around her. This little act completely over-

came Constance: the tears rushed into her eyes, and, rising up, she hastily leant her head on his shoulder to conceal them.

"You must not sit up for me to-night," said he, "for I shall be late; and, dearest, you are not strong enough for our London hours."

There was that in this little speech that curdled the blood at her heart.

"Lady Marchmont's dinners are very gay, I believe?" replied she, in a low and constrained voice.

"So I hear," answered Courtenaye; "but, as you are not well enough to go, I do not feel bound to go either. My engagement is at the Haymarket theatre, to witness the fate of a new play by Walter Maynard, whose poems we have so often read together."

"Oh, how I hope it will succeed!" exclaimed she; her sudden feeling of relief giving unusual energy to her words.

"I hope so, indeed!" replied her husband: "but now, Constance, be a good child, and go to bed; for, I forewarn you, I will tell you nothing about it till to-morrow, at the hour

> 'When lap-dogs give themselves the rousing shake,
> And sleepless lovers just at twelve awake.'"

He then left her, and Constance held her breath to catch the last sound of his receding steps.

"He is, at least, not gone to Lady Marchmont's," murmured she; but, a moment after she reproached herself for her joy. "What! could she wish him to give up an amusement? Perhaps he had seen her dislike, and had yielded to it: she could not bear to think that he had made the least sacrifice to her. She rose from her seat, and began to pace the room with hurried and agitated steps; suddenly she stopped, and earnestly contemplated a picture of her husband, that hung opposite.

"How handsome he is!" exclaimed she, despondingly: "how well he looks his noble and ancient race!"

She then turned to a mirror beside, and gazed on her own countenance: she could not see its sweet expression, she only saw features contracted with anxiety, a cheek pale as death, and eyes filled with tears. The contrast was too painful; and, sinking back on the couch, gave way to a passionate burst of tears. Again she rose, but it was to drop on her knees, her hands clasped in earnest prayer.

"My God," she whispered, "I am but what thou hast willed I should be! Forgive the sorrow that questions of thy righteous pleasure; forgive the human and sinful nature that m

when it should submit: let me not be punished in him. Father of mercies! pardon the prayer that asks, how humbly, how fervently, for his—for my husband's happiness!"

CHAPTER XLIV.

A FIRST NIGHT.

It is a fearful stake the poet casts,
When he comes forth from his sweet solitude
Of hopes, and songs, and visionary things,
To ask the iron verdict of the world.
Till then his home has been in fairyland,
Sheltered in the sweet depths of his own heart;
But the strong need of praise impels him forth;
For never was there poet but he craved
The golden sunshine of secure renown.
That sympathy which is the life of fame,
It is full dearly bought: henceforth he lives
Feverish, and anxious, in an unkind world,
That only gives the laurel to the grave.

Norbourne was glad when he found himself in the open air, and with an object before him in which he was keenly interested. It is the mind ill at ease that seeks for excitement, and Courtenaye found in himself a craving for any amusement that, even for a short time, carried him away from the bitter and busy world within. But now he had a better motive than the mere desire of amusement—he was most anxious for Maynard's success. One of the first things he had done in London, was to find Walter—not a very easy task. Walter shrank from his society with the sensitiveness that belongs to pride and poverty. But Courtenaye would not allow his advances to be rejected; he interested himself in the other's pursuits, and foresaw their future fame. No poet could reject a friend who was also a prophet, and of his own success.

Norbourne was punctual to his appointment; but Maynard was there before him. He found him pacing the little sanded parlour of the tavern appointed for the place of meeting, with irregular and hasty steps: his slight frame quivered with uncontrollable emotion, and his face was absolutely white with agitation. He took Norbourne's hand in silence, and they had walked the length of several streets before he found voice to thank him for coming. When he arrived at the door of the

theatre he made a pause, and then, reminding his companion of his promise to join him, he ran in as if life and death were on his speed. Norbourne went round to the front of the house, where every thing promised well. There was a brilliant audience—rank, beauty, and wit—while he went from box to box, doing his utmost to predispose his listeners in the author's favour. As he looked round the house, he could not but feel that the triumph was well worth the risk: the mastery over human emotion had never before appeared to him so glorious. In another hour the hope and the recollections, the thoughts and the feelings, the most generous aspirations and the tenderest sympathies of our nature, would be stirred, and by what? The noble creation of one gifted and inspired mind!

The overture was almost at a close; and silence being now more effective than any thing that he could urge in favour of the play, Courtenaye went behind the scenes: never had the contrast struck him so forcibly. Before the curtain all was light and brilliancy; beautiful faces appeared with every advantage of dress and situation; placed at their side was the graceful and perfumed cavalier, with flatteries as light as the wave of the fan, that half chided, half encouraged them. Scattered amid the glittering crowd were men whose empire was that at which the youthful author aimed—the empire of the mind. All before the curtain was poetry in its most brilliant, and yet most tangible shape; but behind came the reality—cold, dark, and forbidding. Norbourne felt his enthusiasm suddenly extinguished; he looked with absolute loathing on the scene around him; so gloomy and yet so common. Actors and actresses appeared alike exaggerated and tawdry, and he marvelled what could be the attraction of an existence which seemed divested as much of comfort as of dignity.

Just as these thoughts were passing before him, his attention was drawn to Booth, who to solve a trifling disagreement between him and the author as to the effect which was to be given to a particular passage, began to declaim the speech in question. Courtenaye was at once carried out of himself; he caught the fire of the actor; the splendid voice, the noble gesture, the exalted sentiment, aided by the pomp of the verse, mastered his inmost soul. He was again under the influence of genius, —that influence so subtle and so intense, conquering alike time, place, and circumstance.

He was next struck by the alteration in Walter. His cheek was flushed crimson, his eyes flashed, and he seemed in the wildest spirits; for every actor he had his jest, and for every

actress his compliment. He scarcely appeared to heed what was doing on the stage; perhaps Norbourne was the only one who noticed the convulsive movement of the bitten lip, or the slight shudder which shook him at any unexpected sound. As to Norbourne himself, he tried in vain to speak; leant against one of the side-scenes; all he could do was to watch intently the progress, till he almost felt inclined to spring forward and implore the audience to admire. To him it seemed the most dreadful ordeal to which the human mind could be subjected: all its most precious thoughts brought forward for public scrutiny, perhaps to be misjudged and ridiculed; the labour of months, the hope of a life to be the sacrifice of a single night; and even he knew not the extent of to-night's importance to the author.

Walter Maynard's fortunes wholly depended on the success of his play. Lintot refused to bring out his poems till the fate of the tragedy was decided; and he well knew that if it failed, the cautious bookseller would decline the publication altogether. A few shillings were all he possessed in the world; and yet there he stood, the light word on his lip, and seemingly far less anxious than his friend. The subject of his play was the fate of Agis, the young and heroic King of Sparta: it gave the ideal of patriotism, relieved by the tenderness of sorrow, and the fidelity of love. It is curious to note how much an author throws himself into his creations: there are his passions, his feelings, and his thoughts. He only models his hero by imagining what himself would do in a similar situation. Agis was Walter Maynard; brave, high-minded, devoted, and full of the noblest plans for his country and his kind; and yet with a certain vein of irresolution growing out of theories too fine for reducing into practice. But, in considering an author and his works as one, a sufficient distinction is not drawn between the ideal and the real: the last is only given by being past through the crucible of the first. He does not give the events of his life; but the deductions that have been drawn from those events. It is not that he has been placed in the circumstances that he paints; but a quick intuition born of quick feeling, and that power of observation, which is the first requisite in a poet, enable him to bestow actual life to his breathing pictures: while the life is necessarily coloured by the sentiments and the emotions of the giver.

Every thing now depended on the death of Agis, whether it would take due hold on the sympathies of the audience. Courtenaye augured well from the profound silence; suddenly a burst of applause shook the house, the curtain had fallen, and

Booth sprang to Walter's side, who was still engaged in an animated flirtation with an actress who was to play in the afterpiece. "We have carried every thing before us!" exclaimed he: "I died in splendid style. And now, for supper; I will drink to the liberties of Sparta in nothing less than champagne to-night! I have done wonders for you: I am sure that no one who saw Agis to-night could say that 'Sparta has many a worthier son than he!' I was first-rate!"

"I congratulate you!" was what Courtenaye, as he shook hands with the successful author, tried to say; but he felt that his words were inaudible. At first he could only look his joy; but he was singularly struck with Walter's appearance: the flush of forced spirits had sunk in the presence of his great emotion, and his face was as the face of death.

A dark presentiment sprang up in Norbourne's mind, and a sad pity mingled with his rejoicing. He seemed fascinated by the large lustrous eyes, whose light was not of this world—so unearthly, so wild, was at that moment the expression of Walter's countenance. "He is dying!" sounded like a voice in Norbourne's ears: he tried to shake off what he termed a vain and foolish fear, but it clung to him like an omen. He looked again, and the colour had returned to Maynard's lips, the shadow of the grave had passed away; but Courtenaye still seemed to hear within himself a solemn and fated voice repeat, "He is dying!"

CHAPTER XLV.

SUCCESS.

All things are symbols; and we find
  In morning's lovely prime,
The actual history of the mind
  In its own early time:
So, to the youthful poet's gaze,
  A thousand colours rise,—
The beautiful which soon decays,
  The buoyant which soon dies.

So does not die their influence?
  The spirit owns the spell;
Memory to him is music—hence
  The magic of his shell.
He sings of general hopes and fears—
  A universal tone;
All weep with him, for in his tears
  They recognise their own.

Yet many a one, whose lute hangs now
High on the laurel tree,
Feels that the cypress's dark bough
A fitter meed would be:
And still with weariness and wo
The fatal gift is won;
Many a radiant head lies low,
Ere half its race be run.

THE group of Maynard's friends that gathered round him, only waited till Booth had changed his dress to adjourn to a neighbouring tavern for supper. The excitement needed wine and mirth to carry it off. Suppers were the *ne plus ultra* of human invention; it could go no further, and was obliged to degenerate; dinner is too much matter of business, it is a necessity: now, a necessity is too like a duty ever to be pleasant. Besides, it divides the day instead of winding it up. I do not think, moreover, that people were ever meant to enjoy themselves in the day time. Day belongs to the earthlier deities—the stern, the harsh, and the cold. Gnomes are the spirits of daily hours. Toil, thought, and strife, beset us: we have to work, to quarrel, and to struggle: we have to take our neighbours in; or, at least, to avoid their doing so by us. We are false, designing, and cautious; for, after all, the doom of Ishmael is the doom of the whole race of men. His hand against every one, and every one's hand against him. Talk of general benevolence and philanthropy—nonsense! We all in our hearts hate each other; and good cause have we for so doing. But night comes in with a more genial spirit: we have done our worst and our bitterest; and we need a small space to indulge any little bit of cordiality that may be left in us. A thousand gay phantasms float in on the sunny south, which has left the far-off vineyards of its birth. The taverns of our ancestors would ill bear contrasting with the clubs of to-day; but many a gay midnight was past in the former:—midnights, whose mirth has descended even to us; half the jests, whose gayety is still contagious; half the epigrams, whose point is yet felt, were born of those brief and brilliant hours. Such a supper, and such a party, were now waiting to adjourn to a tavern near the theatre.

While they loitered till Booth doffed his theatrical costume, Norbourne's attention was attracted by the young actress to whom Maynard had been talking; she was looking earnestly at him, and he felt sure that he had seen her face before. Catching his eye, she smiled; and approaching him, said,—

"So, Mr. Norbourne does not choose to remember an old friend."

He started, for the voice was as familiar as the face.

"Lavinia Fenton!" exclaimed he,—"impossible!"

"Not at all impossible," replied the girl; "you know I never liked the country. I had a soul above plaiting cap borders, and picking out false stitches in my lady's embroidery; so, finding that there was no chance of coming to London—you false-hearted man!—with you and my young lady, in a coach and four, I tried if a cart would not do as well."

There was something in this abrupt allusion to the treasured and hidden past, that at once shocked and silenced Norbourne. He was annoyed to find that his heart's sweetest secret was in the possession of one so little likely to keep it; and who, from the very position in which he found her, would, probably, only consider it as matter for a coarse jest.

"How, in the name of all that is wonderful, do I find you here?" asked he, less from any curiosity, than feeling it a necessity to say something.

"Why, luck's all in this world," replied she. "A company of strolling players asked leave to play in our barn; I learnt more of the world in a week than I had in all my life before. At the week's end the barn was vacant, and my place also. The Romeo of the company told me that I had the finest eyes in the world. I had myself long suspected the fact; and, after thinking Friday, Saturday, and Sunday, I set off on the Monday to see what they would do for me here; and, I must say, they have done their duty. At present I have only a soubrette's part, with an apron and pockets, and a ballad; but, as I said before, luck's all in this world, and I have every requisite for being lucky. I have a handsome face, a good voice, I care for nothing and nobody; and when I am a duchess, which I have quite set my mind on being, I will be very grateful to you for having patronised my first benefit, which I shall rely upon your doing."

Half of this voluble discourse was lost upon Norbourne; it seemed as if, within the last few days, he was fated to be haunted by the image of Ethel Churchill: he could not resist making an inquiry. He glanced around, no one was attending; and, in a hurried and agitated tone, he whispered,—"For God's sake, do tell me something of Ethel—Miss Churchill, I mean!"

The girl looked at him earnestly and gravely,—even reproachfully; but there was something in the true emotion of his manner that apparently touched her.

"Mr. Courtenaye," answered she, in a voice even more

guarded than his own, "I can tell you nothing that will, that ought to give you any satisfaction. It is a miserable vanity which delights in the affection it only sought to betray. I know how you sought to win that of my young mistress. Heaven is my witness, that I would not have left her could my stay have been either benefit or comfort. But Ethel Churchill's is no temper to soothe itself with words. She suffers in silence; and light and darkness are not more opposed than our natures,—there never was sympathy between us; but I do pity her. You would scarcely know her again, she is so altered; there she mopes about the house, she who used to be the life of us all. When with her grandmother, she does try and get up her spirits a little; but when out of her sight, she will sit, and not speak a word for hours. This, Mr. Courtenaye, is your doing."

The loud ringing of the prompter's bell made her spring suddenly away; and two of his companions, each taking an arm, hurried him away also. How glad would he have been to have left the party: his thoughts were in a tumult; duties and inclinations warred together—nay, his very sense of right was confounded. To see Ethel once more, to kneel at her feet, to accuse himself, and to implore her pardon, mingled indistinctly in his resolves. The scene before him seemed strangely confused; he heard nothing of what was going on, he was either silent, or his answers were wide of the mark. All at once his mood changed: he sought in his champagne-glass for forgetfulness,—for that he was too excited; but it brought a wild and desperate gayety,—his laugh was the loudest, his jest the readiest, and none did such deep justice to every toast: but within was the quick, aching sense of misery.

It is a strange thing, but so it is, that very brilliant spirits are almost always the result of mental suffering, like the fever produced by a wound. I sometimes doubt tears, I oftener doubt lamentations; but I never yet doubt the existence of that misery which flushes the cheek and kindles the eye, and which makes the lip mock, with sparkling words, the dark and hidden world within.

There is something in intense suffering that seeks concealment, something that is fain to belie itself. In Cooper's novel of the "Bravo," Jacques conceals himself and his boat, by lying where the moonlight fell dazzling on the water. We do the same with any great despair, we shroud it in a glittering atmosphere of smiles and jests; but the smiles are sneers, and the jests are sarcasms. There is always a vein of bitterness

runs through these feverish spirits, they are the very delirium of sorrow seeking to escape from itself, and which cannot. Suspense and agony are hidden by the moonshine.

CHAPTER XLVI.

THE PAST.

Weep for the love that fate forbids;
Yet loves, unhoping, on,
Though every light that once illumed
Its early path be gone.

Weep for the love that must resign
The soul's enchanted dream,
And float, like some neglected bark,
Adown life's lonely stream!

Weep for the love that cannot change;
Like some unholy spell,
It hangs upon the life that loved
So vainly and so well.

Weep for the weary heart condemned
To one long, lonely sigh,
Whose lot has been in this cold world,
To dream, despair and die!

It is a mystery how fate sometimes answers to our secret wishes. All night one thought made Norbourne's pillow restless, and formed part of every troubled dream. He rose, and it was easy to carry it into execution. The day before, his departure from London would have excited the greatest surprise. This morning, the first thing he saw was a letter from his mother, urging his immediate presence at Courtenaye Hall, on account of some pressing business, owing to a lawsuit having just terminated in their favour.

In his journey down, he must pass within twenty miles of Ethel Churchill's home. He at once resolved that he would see her; it was but to implore her forgiveness, and even Constance might forgive the wish. He hurried off, allowing himself no time to think; and the rapid motion and violent exercise produced their usual effect. The fever of the body triumphed over that of the mind; if not forgotten, it was, at least, lulled.

Late at night, he arrived at a little village about two miles

from Mrs. Churchill's house. It required all the influence of his handsome face with the landlady, and his handsome purse with the landlord, to procure those three great requisites for a traveller—admittance, supper, and a bed. Completely wearied out, he retired to rest, and did not waken the following morning till later than he intended. Remembering Ethel's habit of walking before breakfast in the little plantation adjoining the house, he hurried his toilet, in a hope, which he scarcely acknowledged to himself, of meeting her there. He amazed the pretty hostess by refusing breakfast; however, flinging down double the amount of her already unconscionable bill, consoled her for his want of appetite. This done, he sprang on his horse, which he urged to the utmost speed till he came to the once well-known gate, which was the side entrance to the plantation. There he fastened his horse, and, flinging his cloak over the panting creature, entered the little wood.

It was just the beginning of spring; only a few of the trees had as yet ventured to put forth the scarce unfolded leaves; there was the promise of green, rather than the green itself, and that soft yellow, which has the bloom of a flower before the flowers themselves. The gay boughs of the oak were still bare; and the hollies were fresh and bright, though their scarlet berries and Christmas had passed away together. As yet, the banks were uncovered by the various creeping plants which in June were so luxurious; but the maiden's hair flung down its long green tresses, and every sunny nook had its group of primroses—the primrose, which is spring's second herald.

It is curious to note how gradually the flowers warm into the rich colours and aromatic breath of summer. First, comes the snow-drop, formed from the snows which give it name; fair, but cold and scentless: then comes the primrose, with its faint soft hues, and its faint soft perfume—an allegory of actual existence, where the tenderest and most fragile natures are often those selected to bear the coldest weather, and the most bleak exposure. This is fanciful; but the whole place was thronged with "fast coming fancies," so fairy-like were the shadows that fell from the pensile branches, so changeful the golden lights that glimmered on the scarcely budding boughs.

Norbourne felt the influence of the lovely hour and scene. Every step he took brought with it some gentle recollection; for a few moments he wandered on, lost in a delicious revery. But the past only brought the present more vividly before him—he started! for the first time, the folly and the error he was committing seemed to strike forcibly upon his mind. He turned

pale, and leant, breathless, against an oak beside. What could he say to Ethel when he saw her?—he had no excuse that he might offer for his falsehood: what could he say?—nothing! What right had he, the husband of another, to offer Miss Churchill vain regrets, which to her were only insults? and Constance, his sweet, his devoted Constance, she who had not a wish, nor a thought, but what were his own—how could he justify his conduct to her? That she might never know, was nothing. To his own heart he could not answer his meditated treachery; for treachery it was to tell another how much he grieved over a union in which she, at least, was wholly blameless. The tumult and excitement of his soul softened in the sacred presence of nature. He felt that he owed it alike both to Ethel and to Constance, to abandon his intended purpose.

"Yet once again," exclaimed he, passionately, "let me gaze on that beautiful and beloved face! let me see if sorrow has cast a shadow on its surpassing loveliness! I will not let her know how near I am, and how wretched! No, in secret and in silence will I look upon her once more; and then, farewell for ever!"

Only those who know what it is to give up some cherished wish just on its very verge of fulfilment, and give up from that sense of right which it is hard to deny, and yet harder to execute—only they can tell what it cost Norbourne to give up his purpose of seeing Ethel: yet he did give it up; and advanced only with the hope of one distant look, relying on his knowledge of the various little paths to escape through the wood if any one came too near. At length, he stopped within the shelter of a large spreading arbutus, it was too near the house to advance further; but, though sheltered himself, he could see all the once familiar objects. There was the little fountain, the grass-plot, and the summer-house. There they were as of old—they, at least, were the same. He welcomed them as old familiar friends; but, when he glauced around, the symptoms of change were on them as well. Then the pale hues of autumn were around; now, every thing was colouring with spring. He looked, but in vain, for the blue harebells beside the little fountain; they were gone, and with them, how much of hope and of affection had gone too! His heart beat, till he leant breathless on one of the spreading boughs. At that moment, he saw a figure move in the summer-house: it came towards the door: it was Ethel. At first, he only saw the face—it was pale, sad; but there was a change even beyond that nnwonted paleness. Gradually his eye took in her whole appearance. Early as it

was, she was splendidly dressed. Her golden hair glittered with gems in the light of the morning; her robe was of white damask, flowered with silver: and a long white veil was half folded round her.

Norbourne had not courage to even think the surmise that, in spite of himself, would arise. At that moment he saw Mrs. Churchill, attended by a gentleman, both richly attired, come from the house. They advanced to the summer-house, and the cavalier approached Ethel, who still stood in her pensive and abstracted attitude, as if to lead her away. Slowly and reluctantly as it seemed, she let him take her hand; slowly and reluctantly, but she let him take it. The three returned to the house; and Norbourne could see that there were many guests assembled.

"Let me know the worst!" exclaimed he, rushing with frantic violence from the spot. He hurried through the wood, and sprang upon his horse, intending to gallop to the village, and ask about the family. He had not far to go; for he had scarcely gained the road before he met a party of peasants, dressed in their Sunday attire. One question was enough: an elderly woman answered him; " Yes, please your honour, we are going to see Miss Ethel married to a grand gentleman from foreign parts. Norbourne asked no more; but, putting spurs to the horse, he galloped across the common, as if life and death had been upon his speed.

CHAPTER XLVII.

GOSSIPPING.

> These are the spiders of society;
> They weave their petty webs of lies and sneers,
> And lie themselves in ambush for the spoil.
> The web seems fair, and glitters in the sun,
> And the poor victim winds him in the toil
> Before he dreams of danger, or of death.
> Alas, the misery that such inflict!
> A word, a look, have power to wring the heart,
> And leave it struggling hopeless in the net
> Spread by the false and cruel, who delight
> In the ingenious torment they contrive.

A WOMAN's character is developed by the affections: when

once they come into action, how rapidly are the latent qualities called forth, and in how brief a time what a wonderful change is wrought! This process, rapid in all her sex, was unusually rapid in Constance. The bitter fruit of her experience had, like the bean-plant in the fairy tale, grown up in a single night. Guileless, confiding, and affectionate, she was a child in every thing but years when she married her cousin. Till then she knew nought of the world but from books, books that teach so much, and yet so little. A few weeks sufficed to work an amazing alteration: timid and subdued, the difference appeared little on the surface, but it worked not less certainly below. With all her advantages of birth, station, and wealth, it was impossible but that she must excite some degree of envy; and, alas! for human nature, envy will always delight in inflicting mortification.

Many were the disparaging remarks that reached, as they were intended to do, the ear of their victim. On one less sensitive, and more accustomed to the malice which, of all others, seems the vice society peculiarly engenders, they would have fallen comparatively harmless; but with Constance they struck to the heart. She had been so happy in the idea of Norbourne's attachment, that the doubt was dreadful. This disposition was encouraged by many casual expressions respecting Lady Marchmont, and by some, also, that were intentional. Among others, there was a Lady Dudley, a family connexion of her own, who having perceived Mrs. Courtenaye's jealousy (for poor Constance was but little accustomed to dissemble,) did her very best to encourage it.

Lady Dudley was just such a being as is formed by an entire existence amid those

> "Thick solitudes,
> Called social, where all vice and hatred are."

Her youth had passed in intrigues and vanities, and she still lived among them at second-hand: she now talked what she formerly did. Lady Marchmont was an object of her especial dislike; she feared her wit, and could not forgive her youth and beauty. Moreover, there was an interest in any *on dit* about one so much the rage; her looks, laces, and sayings, were equally invaluable as matters of gossip. Moreover, Lady Dudley flattered herself with filling the next best part to the principal, that of *confidante* with Mrs. Courtenaye. Constance had, however, too much good taste, as well as good feeling, for this; she had betrayed her jealousy, not confessed it. Still,

this was enough for her *soi-disant* friend, who went on torturing her with stories about Lady Marchmont's powers of fascination, and Lady Marchmont's coquetry.

"You do not know," said she, after a long visit, which left Constance pale as a statue, her lip feverish with anxiety, and eyes filled with tears which she would not shed: "you do not know what a dangerous person Lady Marchmont is! I should not, my sweet young friend, warn you so much against her, but that I take the deepest interest in your happiness!"

"You are too kind!" sighed Constance.

"You know your husband is a very young man, and a very handsome one—beauty is a dangerous gift!"

"Would I could try its danger!" thought Mrs. Courtenaye, as she caught her own wan and languid countenance in the opposite glance.

"Now, all men are vain, quite as vain as we are; indeed, I always say much more so," continued her tormentor; "and Mr. Courtenaye's vanity must be flattered by Lady Marchmont's admiration!"

"Do you think she admires him, then?" asked his wife, in a startled tone.

"Oh, I say nothing," replied Lady Dudley, with a sneer; "but we all know that Lady Marchmont would fain lead captive every man about town worth looking at. They say that she applied to her conquests the answer of the French actress, who, being asked if she could reckon up her lovers, replied, '*Oui, qui ne sçait compter jusqu'au mille?*'"

"She is very lovely!" said Constance, mournfully.

"Oh, there are others as handsome as she is!" interrupted her ladyship; "but she is such a coquette—quite heartless; and, therefore, the more dangerous. Her passion is universal admiration; and she cares for nothing, so long as her vanity is but gratified: of course, I speak to you in complete confidence. Good-bye, my dearest Mrs. Courtenaye; I say to you what I would not say to any one else for the world!"

So saying, she hurried off, impatient to say precisely the same thing to some fifty or more dearest friends. Just as she left the room, but in time to receive the warmest reception, and a "How charming, my love, you look to-day!" Lady Marchmont made her appearance.

"Ah!" exclaimed she, "I should know that Lady Dudley had been your visiter, you look so weary. There, I will be very good, and allow you five minutes to recover yourself."

"I am not very well to-day," said Constance, rising to re-

ceive her; "I have a headache." What would women do, if headaches were abolished? They are the universal feminine resource.

CHAPTER XLVIII.

CONFIDENCE.

She had that charming laugh, which like a song,
  The song of a spring-bird, wakes suddenly
When we least look for it. It lingered long
  Upon the ear, one of the sweet things we
Treasure unconsciously. As steals along
  A stream in sunshine, stole its melody,
As musical as it was light and wild,
The buoyant spirit of some fairy child;
Yet mingled with soft sighs, that might express
The depth and truth of earnest tenderness.

HENRIETTA took a seat, and soon began a lively conversation; but it is impossible to go on talking, if your listener either cannot or will not answer. Suddenly it struck her visiter that Mrs. Courtenaye had a lurking remembrance of her cold manner to Norbourne on the day of Mrs. Howard's *fete*.

"It was foolish of me," thought she, "I had no right to mark resentment."

With the view of doing this away, she began to make inquiries after Mr. Courtenaye.

"I see that you are too good a wife to be tempted into gayety during your husband's absence; but when he returns, I must persuade you to come and dine with us."

Constance rose from her seat; and, after two or three hurried turns up and down the room, came and sat down by Lady Marchmont, who noted her obvious agitation with both surprise and sympathy.

"You must forgive me," exclaimed she, in a hurried and distressed manner, unable longer to suppress the tears that fell in large slow drops, still half kept back; "but I cannot look upon you and not feel my own wretchedness. I do not wonder that Norbourne loved you!"

"Loved me!" exclaimed Henrietta, too much astonished to say more.

"I know not," continued Constance, passionately, "what

parted you, but you cannot blame me; I knew it not. I thought oh, vain folly! that it was me he loved. Why else did he marry me? But I feel now, oh, how bitterly! that I was not worthy of him. I without beauty, grace—with nothing but a heart, deep love he will never know!"

She hid her face in her hands; the hysterical passion of tears, long subdued, now burst forth, and she wept bitterly, while Henrietta exhausted every effort to soothe her.

"You pity me?" at last exclaimed Constance; will you not then leave me the little that my unwearied affection may gain of his heart? You, so beautiful, so flattered, cannot know what it is not to have a hope or a fear but what is bound up in one beloved object! Tell me," and she knelt at Henrietta's feet, "that you will not seek to win him again from me?"

"There is some strange mistake here," said Lady Marchmont, deeply touched at the emotion she witnessed: "you speak as if some affection existed between Mr. Courtenaye and myself: I am sure that we are equally ignorant of it: but I hate mysteries, they are often miserable, and always mischievous; do tell me what you mean? Believe me that your present unhappiness originates in some misapprehension!"

"Were you never," faltered Constance, "engaged, or attached to Norbourne?"

"Me!" cried Lady Marchmont; "I never knew him till after my own marriage, and then very slightly. I know not how this strange fancy originated, but it has not the shadow of a foundation. Come, tell me candidly, what could have put it in your head?"

"I will," said Constance, who felt intuitively that Lady Marchmont spoke the truth: "I thought that there was something very peculiar in your manner at Mrs. Howard's *fete;* and Lady Dudley——"

"Say no more," interrupted Henrietta; "the very mention of that inveterate gossip accounts for every thing. Do let me, my dear Mrs. Courtenaye," and she took her hand with a kindness that was irresistible, "let me warn you against allowing your happiness to be the sport of a woman like that; one who would not care what misery she caused, if it gave her one moment's importance, or one moment's amusement. Use your own judgment with reference to what she is!"

"I own," replied Constance, "that I certainly neither like nor respect her."

"Why then allow her to influence you?" asked her companion.

"I was wrong, very wrong," returned the other; "but she

seemed kind to me, and— I sometimes feel so lonely. I am not strong enough to go out much, and the days are very long here : in the country I had my birds and my flowers, and there were many who loved me. They were not, it is true, companions, but I returned home happier after visiting our cottages, where so many faces grew brighter to welcome mine ; but in this vast place every thing is so strange and so cold, and I pass very many long and lonely hours, and pass them, perhaps, in nursing foolish fancies."

There was something in this picture that keenly touched Lady Marchmont ; she, too, brilliant as her lot appeared, had many long and lonely hours—hours that craved for confidence and affection.

"Let us be friends," exclaimed she, with a sweet earnestness ; "we shall do each other good. I grow too selfish, living only among the cold, the vain, and the flattering ; while you grow too sensitive, living too much amid your fancies and feelings."

Constance answered by taking the hands so frankly offered, and pressing them in her own, while Lady Marchmont continued :—

"I will tell you all my faults frankly beforehand. I am very vain, for I cultivate my vanity on a principle, and cannot understand why we should neglect such a source of gratification. I take all the admiration I can on the same principle that kings take taxes : I look upon it as my right, They will tell you that I am a coquette, but it is not true ; I do not care enough about people ; besides, I am too impetuous, and too frank. Moreover, my opinions on love are romantic and peculiar ; I never talk about them. I am a bad temper, but you will like me all the better from having occasionally to make up a quarrel with me :—And now, shall we be friends ?"

"I shall only love you too much," said Constance.

"Oh, that is a fault I shall readily overlook !" replied Henrietta, laughing, as she rose to depart : and fast friends they were from that time. Constance found a resource in the gayety of Lady Marchmont, and learnt from her something of more self-reliance, and a more accurate idea of the world in which she was to live. She daily became more attached to her : she saw her faults, though of a different kind to those Lady Marchmont herself confessed ; but she loved her in despite of them ; nor did the young countess attach herself less to her gentle friend. Henrietta was of a much more affectionate temper than she would have confessed even to herself : she delighted in the pleasure which she gave ; and, evening after evening would she sit with Constance, who was quite incapable of further exertion.

CHAPTER XLIX.

UNAVAILING REGRET.

Farewell! and when the charm of change
Has sunk, as all must sink, in shade;
When joy, a wearied bird, begins
The wing to droop, the plume to fade;

When thou thyself, at length, has felt
What thou hast made another feel—
The hope that sickens to despair,
The wound that time may sear, not heal·

When thou shalt pine for some fond heart
To beat in answering thine again;—
Then, false one, think once more on me,
And sigh to think it is in vain.

It was Ethel Churchill, dressed as a bride, and on her wedding morning, that Norbourne had seen. She had sought the summer-house for a few moments of quiet and solitude. There was a dead weight on her spirits, which she rather sought to indulge than to shake off. The torpor had succeeded to the violence of grief; nothing now seemed to interest her. All that constitutes youth had suddenly passed away: she looked forward to nothing, because it appeared to her experience, that to hope and to trust was to insure disappointment and deceit. Ethel actually shrank from the idea of happiness: she had been so happy once; and how dearly had that happiness avenged its brief and sweet presence! Gradually she had sunk into that worst state of misery, and one which in a woman it so frequently assumes; namely, a state of languid and listless dejection. Every thing was a trouble, and nothing a pleasure; while one day passed on into another—dull, monotonous, without an effort to rouse from her utter depression.

One evening she was startled from the gloomy revery in which it had grown her habit to indulge during the family histories, which were perpetual subjects of her grandmother's discourse, by the announcement that a visiter was expected the following day:—"One, Ethel," said the old lady, with a very significant look, "in whom I expect you to take a most peculiar interest."

Ethel shook her head, but said nothing; but her grandmother, who wished to be questioned, went on, as if it were a token of assent.

"And a very handsome young man he is. Perhaps, child, I ought not to say any thing about it; but I have never kept you back like most young women."

Ethel, by-the-by, had never, in the whole course of her life, ventured on offering an opinion in her grandmother's presence.

"Besides, as I wish you to look your best, I may as well tell you, that Mr. Trevanion is coming here to fulfil his part in the contract of marriage which passed between your parents when you were both children."

Certainly Mrs. Churchill's plan, for her grand-daughter to look the best, was any thing but efficacious, in the first instance; for Ethel sank back, pale, and almost fainting.

"Why, what is the matter with the child?" exclaimed the old lady; "there is nothing so very dreadful in a lover; but I shall leave you to find that out when he comes."

"You do not mean," cried Ethel, frightened into speaking, "to insist on my fulfilling a contract of which I never heard. Only let me live on quietly with you—I never mean to marry."

"Very proper to say so," returned Mrs. Churchill, with an air of calm approval; "young ladies ought never to consent till they are asked."

"But when I am asked," said Ethel, more impetuously than she had ever said any thing in her life before, "I have only a refusal to give."

"Very right that you should say so now," replied her grandmother; "but let me caution you against taking any foolish fancies into your head, as if you could be allowed the same choice in a husband that you are in a riband."

"I cannot, will not marry him!" sobbed Ethel.

"Do not, my dear child, talk nonsense. You are not aware of the important interests involved in your marriage. Our wealth and our connexians are of importance to our party. In a few months, I hope that Mr. Trevanion will be able to assume the title so long in his family, of the Earl of Lanriggon. I tell you, in strict confidence, that King James has already affixed his royal seal to the patent. But these are no matters for you: go and gather some roses for me, and try to bring in some on your cheek, as well as in your hand.

CHAPTER L.

Why, what a history is on the rose!
A history beyond all other flowers;
But never more, in garden or in grove,
Will the white queen reign paramount again.
She must content her with remembered things,
When her pale leaves were badge for knight and earl;
Pledge of a loyalty which was as pure,
As free from stain, as those white depths her leaves.
Unfolded to the earliest breath of June.

Mrs. Churchill belonged to a class now completely passed away. The material of the species still remains; but the form under which it exhibits is different. She had the reputation of being learned; and a little learning went a great way in her time. Had she lived now, she would have talked of the last delightful lecture on gas, or the charming new treatise on carbonic acid; she would have studied German, and delighted in the society of "talented people." As it was, she knew some of the Latin names for plants in the herbal. She piqued herself on giving advice, and said very severe things; she also wrote very long letters, and was a warm partisan of the exiled Stuarts. Kind-hearted and well-meaning, she was narrow-minded and rigid, only because she thought it beneath the dignity of a sensible woman to change her mind. Ethel knew that, having once announced her marriage, it would be impossible to alter her grandmother's determination; and it was an awful thing to venture on open opposition to one, whose will had been hitherto blindly obeyed. But Ethel was young and romantic; she resolved to throw herself on the generosity of the coming lover; and felt entirely assured that he must think the heart valueless, that had been, that was but too much still, the property of another. This resolve once taken, she prepared to wait patiently the proper time for carrying it into execution; and was again sad and languid as before.

Mr. Trevanion arrived: he was a tall, slight, and, certainly, a handsome young man, and perfectly aware of whatever advantages he possessed. He had lived chiefly abroad; and if any thing in England satisfied him, it was the satisfaction of abusing every thing. With Mrs. Churchill he soon became a first-rate favourite. His head was quite turned with mysteries, secret correspondences, and plots: he met her on her own weak point.

Both delighted to hear themselves talk, and both talking themselves out of all rationality; for words, like wine, get up into the head: they passed hours in conversational conspiracies, till both the old woman and the young man believed that the house of Hanover only waited their impetus to tremble to its downfal.

Ethel found that it was not so easy to make her intended disclosure; for when she attempted to speak to Mr. Trevanion, she was overwhelmed with such a flood of flowery eloquence, that she was dismayed into silence. The time grew terribly near; and courage has oftener despair for its mother than any other parent. She seized an opportunity when he was walking up and down the terrace—in his own mind the very personification of Shakspeare's comet,

> "Perplexing monarchs, with the fear of change,"

to walk also and meet him. Of course, his political meditations were put to flight by her appearance. He requested permission to join her, and was soon eloquent in the description of the last *fete* that he had witnessed at Versailles.

Mr. Trevanion was one of those talkers, who are too much engrossed with their own subject matter to have much attention to bestow elsewhere; with them silence is attention. Ethel's wandering eye and lip, tremulous with its effort to speak, would never have attracted his notice. To his utter astonishment, she interrupted a parenthesis, as brilliant as the rocket which it depicted, by saying,—

"Mr. Trevanion, I do not know what you will think of my boldness, but I must speak to you."

"Speak," said the gentleman, with a theatrical air; "and I will ask no other music."

Agitated, blushing, and in a voice scarcely audible at first, she began her confession. Gradually the strong emotion prevailed over the weaker one, and timidity was merged in feelings that grew more powerful as she proceeded.

"I have now told you all; forgive and pity me. I ask of yourself, how could I do otherwise than decline an engagement, when I have no heart to bestow?" The tears filled her dark blue eyes; never had she felt the shame and wretchedness of her position so forcibly before. "May I ask of you," continued she, in faltering tones, "to tell my grandmother that our engagement is broken off?"

"Well, certainly," exclaimed Mr. Trevanion, "this is the most charming piece of *bergerie* it has ever been my good fortune to witness."

Ethel looked at him in blank amazement, while he went on.

"Indeed, my sweet Miss Churchill, I cannot be sufficiently grateful. Between ourselves, the country is rather *triste*, and you have given me positively a sensation; yet my forte is not the Arcadian: however, I will do my *petit possible* to console you for the loss of *le beau Lindor*, who was my predecessor."

"Sir," said Ethel, "I do not understand you."

"Very probably not!—charming ignorance!" replied Mr. Trevanion, with a patronising expression. "A few weeks in Paris will soon give you a little knowledge of the world; but the effect of your first simplicity will be delicious. Ah, there is Mrs. Churchill! let us join her. I suppose, as I have been playing the part of *confident*, I must not make her laugh over our little romance."

Ethel was silent from surprise: she had prepared herself for anger—even sorrow; but ridicule left her without an answer. What could she say to a hearer who only smiled, and to whom emotion was only a scene in a pastoral? That night she made an appeal to her grandmother; but in vain. Mrs. Churchill would have thought that she had sacrificed the cause of the Stuarts to a girl's folly, had she for a moment entertained the idea of dissolving an engagement with Mr. Trevanion. What could Ethel do but submit? It was not as if she had had any hope in the future to enable her to bear up against the present; but hope she had none, and only hope can inspirit resistance.

CHAPTER LI.

THE CHURCH.

> The altar, 'tis of death! for there are laid
> The sacrifice of all youth's sweetest hopes.
> It is a dreadful thing for woman's lip
> To swear the heart away; yet know that heart
> Annuls the vow while speaking, and shrinks back
> From the dark future that it dares not face.
> The service read above the open grave
> Is far less terrible than that which seals
> The vow that binds the victim, not the will;
> For in the grave is rest.

SOON—how soon it appeared to come!—the day appointed for Miss Churchill's marriage arrived. With a faint shudder,

she looked from her window. The whole garden was bathed in sunshine ; a light wind stirred the branches, which seemed filled with singing birds: she turned away; the light and the music were painful to her. Who has not felt this exaggeration of the sick heart, which reproaches inanimate nature with its lack of sympathy, which turns from the golden light of day, from the cheerful sights and sounds that fill the open air with rejoicing, as if the gladness only mocked their misery ! Passively, she allowed her grandmother to hurry her toilet, who would not see how wan and ill she looked. When all was complete, she turned away from the glass as she had turned away from the window, with a deeper feeling of desolation. It was a relief to glide away unperceived ; and almost mechanically she sought the open air, and entered the summer-house, from the habit of turning her steps thither, rather than from any will on her own part. She was not permitted to remain there long ; and Mr. Trevanion, accompanied by Mrs. Churchill, conducted her to the apartment where the guests were assembled.

All the Jacobite gentry of that part of the country were collected together ; though, it must be confessed, their appearance and their usual after-dinner conversation were rather at variance. Now they looked calm and comfortable, with as little the appearance of conspirators as possible ; then they were (by their own account) the most oppressed of individuals, and the most devoted of partisans, ready to die, so that their wrongs were redressed, and the rightful king restored. There was a great show of gayety ; for the neighbourhood being a dull and scattered one, any thing that wore the resemblance of festival was doubly welcome.

Again Ethel felt how little sympathy was there with her sadness. A thousand wild plans of escape even now flitted across her mind ; but they were vague and confused fancies, which she lacked the energy, even if she had had the power, to execute. A dull sense of suffering weighed upon her heart. She heard voices, she saw faces, but they produced no impression upon her ; and she allowed herself to be handed into the carriage, almost without knowing what she did. The long and slow procession, at length, reached the church ; and it took up almost as much time to range the different friends in their appointed and proper places. An old gentleman, a distant, and their nearest connexion, led Ethel forward, filled only with the idea of the important situation he himself held, in having to give away the bride. There she stood, her large blue eyes dilated far beyond

their usual size, fixed on vacancy. There was not a tinge of colour on a cheek usually so blooming—nay, her very lip had lost its crimson: she looked as white as her dress.

Mrs. Churchill watched her anxiously; perhaps, now that it was too late, she repented having urged the match so peremptorily, as more than one doubt crossed her mind of the future happiness of her gentle and affectionate child. She saw her there—wan, wasted, broken in spirits,—a victim, rather than a bride! but such misgivings were now in vain.

The clergyman had taken his place at the altar, when the attention of the party assembled was attracted to loud and unusual sounds in the churchyard. There was the galloping of horses, the clang of heavy steps and spurs, and the jingle of swords. The suspense was brief; for the next moment an officer, accompanied by a magistrate, with some half-dozen soldiers following, entered the church. In another instant the warrant was produced, and James Trevanion was arrested on a charge of high treason. All now was rage and confusion; and some of the younger among the bridal guests showed symptoms of resistance.

"Gentlemen," said the magistrate, calmly, "the door is surrounded by troops: opposition to my disagreeable duty can only bring fatal consequences to yourselves. Remove the prisoner at once. Madam," continued he, addressing Mrs. Churchill, "I am sorry to say that there are suspicious circumstances in which you are implicated. In consideration of your age and high respectability, I have ventured to take upon myself to answer for you; but, at present, I must request that you will accept the hospitality of my house."

Mr. Trevanion advanced forward; but the magistrate interposed.

"I can feel," said he, "for a gentleman in your circumstances! but it is my duty to see that no communication takes place between yourself and the ladies involved in the suspicion of treasonable practices. Your farewells must be made in my presence."

And how did Ethel feel?—like a wretch, under sentence of death, who, at the very scaffold, receives a reprieve. She was only alive to the joy of her release: for a moment, she thought of nothing but her own escape.

"Thank God!" exclaimed she, to the utter dismay of the two bridesmaids within hearing; and, throwing herself on her knees, she hid her face in her hands, and uttered a hurried and passionate thanksgiving.

CHAPTER LII.

PRESENTIMENT.

I feel the shadow on my brow,
  The sickness at my heart;
Alas! I look on those I love,
  And am so sad to part.

If I could leave my love behind,
  Or watch from yonder sky
With holy and enduring care,
  I were not loath to die.

But death is terrible to Love:
  And yet a love like mine
Trusts in the heaven from whence it came,
  And feels it is divine.

Mrs. Courtenaye's house was, that night, the gayest in London. Lord Norbourne wished that the *fête* given by his daughter should be without a rival. He spared no expense, and Lady Marchmont no taste.

"I see clearly," said Constance to her, the very morning of her party, "that society is as much a science as astronomy; and, also, that, like poetry, one must be born with a genius for it. What should I have done without you? After once satisfying my anxiety that Norbourne would return in time (he looks sadly fagged with his journey,) there seemed to be nothing more to care about."

"Why, my dear child, of all the people that you expect, your husband is of the least importance!" replied Henrietta, laughing.

Constance shook her head, and smiled, as she answered,—

"Give me Norbourne, my father, and yourself, and I should be only too glad to see none beside. A crowd frightens me: I feel so keenly among strangers that there is nothing in me to attract or to please, that I shrink, with sudden fear, back into the little circle who, I hope, will love me for the deep and exceeding love that I bear to them."

"I am sure," exclaimed Lady Marchmont, passing her arm caressingly round Constance's neck, "not to love you, would be to have a heart of ice, or no heart at all. But you and I go through life on different principles: you ask of life its affections; I ask its amusements: I like to be admired; you like to be

loved: you would tremble at the idea of an enemy; I should only think of one as giving me an opportunity of triumph: I should confide in my success, and feel quite grateful for the victory over them, which, I am sure, I should have."

"Ah!" exclaimed Mrs. Courtenaye, timidly, "beavtiful as you are, gay as you always seem, I never think of you without a sensation of fear—fear for your sake, dear Henrietta!"

"Fear!" replied the other, her dark eyes kindling with haughtier light; "I should like to know the sensation, it would be something quite new!"

"Nay," interrupted her friend, "so young, every thing must be new to you!"

"I do not know," returned Lady Marchmont, "whether I am young; I believe that I am, counting my years,—a most uncertain way of reckoning, by-the-by,—but I feel very old. I scarcely know any thing that really interests me, and I would give a great deal not to be so quick-sighted as I am; it would be so pleasant to believe only a tithe of the professions that are made me."

"It is a dreadful thing to doubt!" returned Constance, sadly: "I do not know why, but there is something about you that discourages me almost as much as my father's conversation sometimes does. What is there that nature has not done for you? and yet you are not happy. I have watched you in your most brilliant moments: others went away saying, what charming spirits Lady Marchmont has! but I saw that they were forced."

"You are right!" exclaimed Henrietta: "I so often feel that I am not loved, and not valued as I deserve to be. I carry the coldness of my own hearth about me; and with the usual exaggeration of self-love, I fancy people must see the dejection under which I often labour: I disdain their pity, and put on a vizor of smiles to ward it off."

"Ours is a strange world," said Constance, in a sad and thoughtful tone; "I see little enjoyment, and much misery; for which, also, I see no remedy: I am often frightened and weary when I think of it. Every day more and more reconciles me to the idea of leaving it. I could lay my head down on my last pillow, and sleep gladly, like a tired child, but for my father."

"My dearest Constance," cried Lady Marchmont, "I will not let you talk in this dejected mood; many, many happy years are before you!"

"It is not a dejected mood, dearest friend," was the answer; "It is one of faith and of hope. God has, for his own good

purposes, weaned my heart from a world in which he means me to make but a brief sojourn. Only those destined for an early grave ever felt as I do: I speak not of my bodily health, though that grows weaker every day, but it is my own heart that foretells its doom. It craves for rest and for peace; here it has beat too quickly, and too vainly."

"You, my gentle and timid Constance!" interrupted Henrietta.

"Ay, for years I lived in the wild worship of an earthly idol! I loved my cousin as those love whom nothing distracts from the one cherished object! I was solitary, neglected, debarred by my health from the ordinary pursuits of my age, but one image supplied the place of all others; I have passed hours thinking of Norbourne, till his own presence was scarcely more actual than my waking dream. I married him; and, for a time, forgot that earth was not heaven! I was too happy; and, as if I were to owe all to him whom I loved so utterly, my marriage gave me a share I never before possessed in my father's affection; and I found, too, that he was happier for loving me. I forgot all but this life: it shut out eternity. I cannot tell you how I awakened from my dream, for dream it was—so gradual but so sad was my awakening. Too soon the subtle instinct of love told me that I was not to Norbourne what he was to me!"

"No woman ever is to a man," interrupted Lady Marchmont: "your solitary education has led you to form ethereal fancies that can never be realised. It is impossible to be a more affectionate, or a kinder husband, than Mr. Courtenaye."

"He is too kind," replied Constance, mournfully, "he feels that he has to make up to me for the heart which I have not. I am punished for having worshipped too entirely an earthly idol: it has not been given to me to make that happiness which I would purchase, ah! how gladly, at the expense of my own! But he loves me not, and he loves another. Why he married me, I know not."

Lady Marchmont thought that Lord Norbourne's wealth was a too sufficient reason; but, for worlds, she would not have said so, and Constance continued:—

"Some might think that the riches of the heiress bought the hand, though it could not buy the heart; but it was not that which made me the wife of Norbourne Courtenaye. I have known him from a boy, generous and disinterested: others may judge of him even as they themselves would have acted, but I judge him by old and perfect knowledge: but I fear that my

father used undue influence; perhaps he appealed to my cousin's pity. Oh, Henrietta! you talked of disdaining pity; I am thankful even for that; but it is a dreadful requital for love!"

She paused in agitated silence, and Henrietta felt that silence and caresses were at first her only answer; but, having soothed her companion into more of composure, she could not but add, "but you are married, and might both be happy yourself, and make your husband's happiness. It is not in any nature, more especially one kind and generous as his, to be insensible to your devotion, or to your many engaging qualities; why dwell on these sad and vain imaginations?"

"They are sad, but not vain," replied Constance; "but for them I should still cling too closely to a world I shall soon leave for ever! I have at last learned to say, 'Not my will, but thine, O Father! be done.' I am content to think that he will remember me with a tender grief; and how could I bear to dwell for a moment on the agony of sorrow that he must feel, did he love me with a love like mine own, and had to part? It soothes me to feel that he will be spared that bitterest, that terrible despair."

"Do not speak thus," exclaimed Henrietta, her eyes filling with tears as she gazed on the face now so lovely, with its sweet and inspired expression.

"It relieves me," replied Constance, "my spirits were overburdened. The weakness of our nature subdues us to the last; but the time may come, when, freed from all the bitterness, all the selfishness that belongs unto mortal love, I shall watch over him even as an angel watches, and find my happiness in his, even in another and a better world!"

CHAPTER LIII.

THE FETE.

There was a feast that night,
And coloured lamps sent forth their odorous light
Over gold carvings, and the purple fall
Of tapestry; and around each stately hall
Were statues pale, and delicate, and fair,
As all of beauty, save her blush, were there;
And, like light clouds floating around each room,
The censers sent their breathing of perfume;

And scented waters mingled with the breath
Of flowers that died as they rejoiced in death.
The tulip, with its globe of rainbow light;
The red rose, as it languished with delight;
The bride-like hyacinth, drooping as with shame,
And the anemone, whose cheek of flame
Is golden, as it were the flower the sun,
In his noon hour, most loved to look upon.
At first the pillared halls were still and lone,
As if some fairy palace, all unknown
To mortal eye or step:—this was not long—
Wakened the lutes, and rose the sound of song;
And the wide mirrors glittered with the crowd
Of changing shapes: the young, the fair, the proud,
Came thronging in.

MIDNIGHT brought with it all the world to Lord Norbourne's —at least that portion of it which calls itself the world, to the exclusion of all the rest. His usual good fortune attended him; and the management of a *fête* requires as much good fortune as any thing else. How many were in that glittering crowd whose names are still familiar to us! There was the Duchess of Queensberry, who had not as yet cut the king and queen, looking strangely beautiful, and half tempting one to believe in the doctrine of transmigration; namely, that the soul of the Duchess of Newcastle had transmigrated into the body of the modern peeress. There she was, doing rude things, and saying ruder, which every body bore with the best grace in the world: then, as now, it was perfectly astonishing what people in general will submit to in the way of insolence, provided the said insolence be attended by rank and riches. Near her was the young and beautiful Duchess of Marlborough, wearing the diamond necklace she had recently purchased with Congreve's legacy —last memorial of the small vanity which had characterized him through life. The money now lavished on the ostentation of a splendid toy, what a blessing would it have been to some one struggling with life's worst difficulties—poverty and pretence!

Lord Peterborough was talking to her,—a man sent into the world to show that the Amadis could have its prototype in reality; and yet all his heroic qualities dashed with a ridicule, as much as to say, the present age is quite unfit for them. Next came a crowd of young beauties, who shed their own brilliancy around; and near were a group of cavaliers, "fine gentlemen about town," who, whatever else they might doubt, had not a doubt of their own irresistibility. And, crowning glory of the

evening! a conquest was made, a conquest so sudden, so brilliant, and so obvious, that it was enough to give any *fête* at which it occurred the immortality of a season.

At Lord Norbourne's express petition, the beautiful Miss Walpole was allowed to emerge from the seclusion of Houghton, where she had been wasting her sweetness on the desert air for the last two years. Very lovely, and very simple-minded, she was allowed more of her own way than it is ever good for a woman to have. Engrossed in politics, her brother left her almost entirely to her own amusements and fancies. Unfortunately, she was induced to accept an invitation to stay at Lord Wharton's, a man notorious for what are so strangely misnamed gallantries, and whose lady was as bad as himself. She had scarcely reached the place before, also, her intended visit reached Sir Robert's ears. With him a resolution always carried itself into action with all possible rapidity: he ordered post horses to his carriage, and went himself as courier to precede it. Making no excuses, and listening to none, he insisted on his sister's immediate appearance and departure, and sent her off next day into Norfolk. Fortune, however, to-night seemed resolved on making full amends to a beauty cut short in the first flush of success, and sent to waste two of her prettiest years in the dull seclusion of an old house in the country.

"What blooming simplicity!" exclaimed Lord Townshend.

"Positive milk of roses!" exclaimed Lady Mary Wortley Montague; but the sneer passed unheeded; and Lord Townshend, crossing the room, entreated Mrs. Courtenaye to present him to her lovely young friend.

Miss Walpole was a soft, sleepy-looking beauty, with a pretty, startled, fawnlike look in her large eyes; shy, silent, and with gathered blushes of two summers on her cheek: but, if she had few words, she had a great many smiles, and of these Lord Townshend had the entire benefit. She was just one of those sweet and simple creatures whose attraction Talleyrand so well described, when he was asked what was the charm he found in Madame ——'s society: "*C'est que cela me repose!*"

Nothing could be more satisfactory than this conquest was to Lord Norbourne; he saw how it would strengthen the connexion between Walpole and Townshend, and he liked the *éclat* of its happening at his daughter's house. No one in his secret soul more despised the small vanities and successes of society, while he, also, well knew the advantage to which they might be turned; but he had to-night one deeper and dearer source of

gratification—it was seeing his daughter look so well. Lady Marchmont had superintended her toilet, and it was the very triumph of exquisite taste; every thing about it seemed as fragile and as delicate as herself. The robe was the palest pink taffety, trimmed with the finest lace, and a magnificent set of emeralds served to contrast her soft fair hair. The excitement of the evening lighted up her eyes, and warmed her cheek with a faint but lovely colour—

"The crimson touched with pale."

The royal party had just departed; Queen Caroline having said all those flattering things which come with such a grace from royalty, and which no one knew better how to apply than she did; and the circle, sufficiently satisfied with distinction, began to grow gayer than ever.

"My dear Constance, your hand is very feverish," said Norbourne, approaching his wife; "you are exerting yourself too much: come with me to the next room, it is much cooler there."

She thanked him with the deeper colour of pleasure, for one kind word of his made her heart beat its quickest and sweetest time, and they turned to go into the adjoining room. At that moment there was a simultaneous rush towards the spot where a popular singer was commencing a favourite song of the time; Norbourne felt the arm that was in his cling suddenly to him for support, and then relax its hold: he had scarcely time to prevent her sinking on the ground. He caught her up, and bore her to the first window near. The blood was rushing from her nose and mouth—she had broken a blood-vessel!

CHAPTER LIV.

THE SICK ROOM.

If ever angels walked on weary earth
In human likeness, thou wert one of them.
Thy native heaven was with thee, but subdued
By suffering life's inevitable lot;
But the sweet spirit did assert its home
By faith and hope, and only owned its yoke
In the strong love that bound it to its kind.

THE cold gray light of the morning was struggling through

the closed windows, and making the mournful light of a sick room yet more mournful; around were signs of recent festivity, in strange contrast to the ghastly present. The wax lights were slowly burning down; on the dressing-table, and before the mirror, were scattered a thousand gay toys and trifles. Flasks of precious scents, left open in the hurry, made the atmosphere heavy with perfume, while gems of immense value were laid carelessly among them.

The dress of the preceding evening had been flung on a chair near, and on the floor was a bouquet of rare, but faded flowers, and a glittering fan; but the glitter of the fan was stained with red blood-spots. What now were the graceful vanities of the night? Nothing, or less than nothing! Wrapped in a white dressing-gown, which had been hastily thrown round her, her hair loosened from its confinement, but with some of the neglected jewels yet shining in it, lay Constance Norbourne. Life was fast ebbing away, and the physician had said that there was no hope. There she lay, white as the pillow on which she rested for the last time; a dull film had gathered over the eyes which yet dwelt lovingly on the friends beside her; and her fallen mouth, with the faint purple circle around it, indicated the near approach of death. Lady Marchmont, still in the gay costume of the preceding night, sat on the bed, and supported the head of her dying friend; while Norbourne knelt beside, holding the wan hand, whose pulsation grew feebler every moment. Lord Norbourne stood beside, and watched his last, his most beloved child, dying before him; his last hope, his last sweet link of affection breaking.

"It cannot be!" exclaimed he, in a burst of uncontrollable emotion; "so young, so very young, to die! Tell me that your skill can save her, and take all I have in the world!"

The physician took his hand, and strove to draw him aside; but the attempt caught the eye of the sufferer; she strove to raise herself, and extend her hand to her father, but it dropped heavily on the coverlet.

"Let him stay!" said she, faintly; and, looking towards the physician, continued: "I know I am dying, but death is not yet in my heart. Can you not give me a moment's strength? any thing to dispel, for a little while, this faint sickness? A few words are all I want to say, I cannot die without saying them!"

"Let her have her own way," whispered the medical man; and, pouring a few restorative drops into a glass of water, he

held it to her lips, while Lady Marchmont bathed her temples with essence.

Either they revived her, or expiring nature felt the unconquerable strength of love mighty even to the last. She sat half upright, supported on Henrietta's shoulder; and, taking her father's hand, she clasped it with her husband's.

"He will be your child," said she; "my remembrance will be the link to bind you together. My beloved father, you owe him a debt only affection can repay. Think how kind he has always been to your wearied and suffering child: night after night he has watched over me; day after day he has given up pleasures and occupations to yield me the only enjoyment of which I was capable—the conscious happiness of his presence. And you, dearest Norbourne, will you not cling to his old age like a dear and only son? Love him, were it only for the great love that I have borne unto you!"

Again her head dropped on the pillow, and her father and husband felt the hands that had clasped theirs relax their faint pressure, and again Henrietta wiped away the cold dews that stood on her forehead. She lay for some minutes motionless, save when the heavy eyelids were slowly raised, and her dim eyes yet dwelt fondly on those who watched her least movement. All at once her eyes kindled, and she again raised herself, with a little of Henrietta's instant assistance. Constance put her hand under the pillow, and drew from thence a small Bible.

"Father!" exclaimed she, "this has been my constant companion, let it henceforth be yours. May it teach you, even as it has taught me, the blessed hope in which I die: we shall meet again in a happier and a better world! Henrietta, dear and kind friend, think sometimes of the peace and faith which support me even in death. Father, my beloved father! could I leave you as I do, with words of comfort, but for that Divine belief whose trust is immortal! God bless you!"

She sank back, fainting; but this time it was Norbourne's arm that supported her: once again her eyes unclosed, and fixed on her husband's face with an expression of the most utter tenderness: from thence they never moved again. The eyelids closed wearily, and there was a convulsive movement of the hands; then came a frightful stillness, broken by a low gurgling in the throat. The mouth fell; the hand Lord Norbourne clasped grew still and rigid; her husband bent over her, and touched her lips—they were ice—it was a corpse that he held in his arms.

CHAPTER LV.

The fountain's low singing is heard on the wind,
Like a melody bringing sweet fancies to mind;
Away in the distance is heard the far sound
From the streets of the city that compass it round,
Like the echo of mountains, or ocean's deep call:
Yet that fountain's low singing is heard over all.

The turf and the terrace slope down to the tide
Of the Thames, that sweeps onward a world at its side;
And dark the horizon with mast and with sail
Of the thousand tall ships that have weathered the gale;
While beyond the arched bridge the old abbey appears,
Where England has garnered—the glories of years.

There are lights in the casement—how weary the ray
That asks from the night time the toils of the day!
I fancy I see the brow bent o'er the page,
Whose youth wears the paleness and wrinkles of age;
What struggles, what hopes, what despair may have been,
Where sweep those dark branches of shadowy green!

The last gleams of a summer sunset were reddening amid the topmost boughs of the Inner Temple garden, while the shadow fell dark as the night it heralded, on the turf below. Though in the heart of a vast city, it was impossible to imagine a more perfect picture of repose than was here presented. Not a creature was to be seen; the birds rested on the boughs, undisturbed by a fluttering wing or a snatch of a song. There were red and white roses growing around: but the rival flowers were unstirred by even a breath of wind; they were still as the ashes of the once stirring spirits that gathered them as badges for their fatal warfare. Strange that the flower so peculiarly the lover's own, around which hung the daintiest conceits of poesy on which the eye lingers, to dream of the cheek it holds loveliest on earth—strange that the rose should have been sign for the fiercest struggle ever urged by party strife—a strife that laid desolate the fair fields of England for so many years. And yet, how much chivalric association has Shakspeare flung around their bloom! But for him, the wars of the "rival houses" would be but obscure chronicles of inglorious wars—fighting for fighting's sake; no liberty to be defended or obtained, and no foreign enemy driven triumphantly from the frontier: but for him, "the aspiring blood of Lancaster" would long since have sunk in the

ground. But Shakspeare has called life out of the past; a thousand passions of humanity hang around those white and red flowers. He has given the lasting archive to the high-born house that boasted,—

> "Our aiery buildeth in the cedar's top,
> And dallies with the wind, and scorns the sun."

It is he who has given the life of memory to "the princely Edward," the subtle Richard, the brave-spirited Margaret, and the sad philosophy of the meek Henry, which comes to many weary of a bleak and troubled world; and never do we feel how completely Shakspeare was our national poet, till we tread his own *locale.*

I confess I have a great disdain for the west end of the town It belongs to the small, the petty, and the present. From Hyde Park Corner to Charing Cross, all is utterly uninteresting: then history begins. We have the feudal state in the gloomy and Gothic grandeur of Northumberland House; we pass along the Strand, where Jack Cade pursued his brief triumph—the prototype of every popular insurrection unbased on any great principle—sudden, cruel, and useless! We have the last fine speech of Lord Scales in our ears,—

> "Ah, countrymen! if, when you make your prayers,
> God should be so obdurate as yourselves,
> How would it fare with your departed souls?"

and in the green solitude of the Temple garden is the very place to muse upon his words. We leave the crowded street behind: we linger for a moment beside the little fountain, the sweetest that

> Ever sang the sunny hours away,
> Or murmured to the moonlit hours of love.

It is, I believe, our only fountain, and all the associations of a fountain are poetical. It carries us to the East, and the stately halls of the caliphs rise on the mind's eye; and we think over the thousand and one stories which made our childhood so happy, and stored up a world of unconscious poetry for our future years: or else it conjures up the graceful old Italian histories of moonlight festivals, when the red wine was cooled, and the lute echoed by the soft sound of falling waters. We leave the world of reality behind us for that of romance. The little

fountain keeps, with its music, the entrance, as if to lull all more busy cares before we enter that quiet garden. Once entered in, how much lies around to subdue the troubled present with the mighty past! The river is below, with its banks haunted by memory.

The whole history of England—and it is a glorious one—is called up at a glance. Westminster Abbey—the altar of the warrior, and the grave of the poet—sheds its own sanctity on the atmosphere; and yet to look beneath the still shadow of those stately trees, in the spiritual presence of the departed, life is as troubled and as anxious as elsewhere; the cares of to-day predominate, let the scenes around be what they may.

"I cannot help," said Walter Maynard, as he gazed, listlessly, from one of the upper windows, "reading my fate in one of those little boats now rocking on the tide, only fastened by a rope, scarcely visible to the passer by. So am I tossed on the ebbing tide of life—now in sunshine, now in shade—seemingly free, yet, in reality, fettered by the strong, though slight chain of circumstance. For a small sum, any passenger may enter that boat and direct its course; and here again is similitude I am at the beck of others. I may scarcely think my own thoughts, they must run in whatever channel public taste may choose; and that puts me in mind how I promised Curl his pamphlet this very night. How weary I am of exhausting the resources of language in dressing up the vague commonplaces of party, or giving plausibility to sophisms I feel to be untrue! but it must be done:" and, muttering to himself,

> "For inspiration round his head,
> The goddess Want her pinions spread,"

he drew his table towards him, and began to write.

The scene of his labours, and his own appearance, were much changed since his first lodging in London. Still, there was an air of careless discomfort in his room; nothing was in its place; books, foils, papers, and clothes, were scattered together, and a female mask lay beside his inkstand. He was fashionably dressed; but looked, as was really the case, as if he had not been in bed the previous night. His face was worn, and one red flush burnt on each cheek; though even that could scarcely animate the sunk and heavy eye. After a few minutes passed, first in writing, then in erasing what he had written, "It is of no use," said he, flinging down the pen, "I am not worth a single phrase; alas! I want motive—the mere necessity of exertion

is not enough. Would that I could dream as I once dreamed! that I could still think fame the glorious reality I once held a whole life's labour would cheaply purchase! But what does it matter, whether there be a name or not on the tombstone that weighs down our cold ashes? Ah! I promised Marston his verses to-morrow: I sell my opinions, I may as well do the same with my sentiments;" and again he drew the paper towards him.

At first he wrote mechanically, and flung aside one sheet of paper, and then another; it was no longer the eager and impassioned writer, who, in his early composition, forgot want, cold, and misery: no, the real had eaten, like rust, into his soul. Last night's excess had left him weary and feverish; yet of all shapes that temptation can assume, surely that of social success is the most fascinating.

The imaginative temperament is full of vivid creations, of fanciful imagery, and sudden thoughts, all of which are impelled by their nature to communication; and to find that this communication interests or amuses, is a powerful stimulus. The vanity is at once encouraged and gratified; while the present small triumph is too readily taken as earnest for a greater one. The vanity I speak of is vanity of the highest and best kind; it belongs to the class of our most ethereal emotions; it asks "golden opinions from all ranks of men," because it is keenly susceptible, and has an even feminine craving for sympathy; it asks not so much praise as appreciation; it is generous and self-devoted: still it is vanity.

There is also in mental exertion an absolute necessity for reaction: how often do the thoughts, long confined to one subject, crave, as it were, to spring out of themselves, or to run off in any opposite direction! To this may be ascribed the difference that often exists between the writings and the conversations of genius. In the first is embodied the moral truth of their being, worked out by strong belief and deep feeling; the other contains all that is sceptical and careless,—it is the glitter of the waters when not at rest. The thousand paradoxes that spring up, are thrown off both for amusement and for relief; and recklessly flung aside by the utterer, who never means them to be taken as the creed of his real sentiments, or of his more earnest thoughts.

Walter Maynard was melancholy, impassioned, and sensitive; his heart preyed upon itself when alone: but, in society, he was lively, witty, and easily carried away by the impetus of

discourse. Last night, the ready answer, the quick ridicule, the quaint imagery, which clothed his ideas as some fantastic garment, had made him the life of that gay meeting; but to-day he was paying the penalty of over-excitement. Fatigued and depressed, he saw nothing but difficulties and labour before him. He took up the papers beside him, and more than one unpaid bill was mingled with them. Instead of forcing upon him the necessity of exertion, they discouraged him from attempting it: of late, he had led a very gay life.

Norbourne Courtenaye had introduced him to several young men about town, who, rich and idle, were only too glad to fall in with so amusing a companion. Midnight after midnight passed away in their society; for Walter was flattered and excited. But deep in his inmost soul he felt that this was not the fate he had purposed to achieve amid the green valleys of his youth. His early dreams haunted him like reproaches; and every morning he rose with the full purpose of pursuing some more settled plan: but he lacked motive, he had no one dependent on his industry; and every day he grew to care less and less for hopes, that he now overharshly held to be illusions.

To see much of mankind sickens the philosopher and the poet; only in solitude can he continue to work for their benefit, or to crave for their sympathy. An expression that Pope had used while talking to Walter, had produced a far deeper impression than its utterer suspected, or, perhaps, intended. "If," said Pope, "I were to begin life over again, knowing what I know now, I would not write a single verse."

Maynard could not help thinking "Of what avail is toil, if such be the result? Have I, then, devoted life to a shadow? is its pursuit weary, and its possession worthless? Yet this is what our greatest poet says of poetry."

CHAPTER LVI.

Oh, what a waste of feeling and of thought
Have been the imprints on my roll of life!
What worthless hours! to what use have I turned
The golden gifts which are my hope and pride!
My power of song, unto how base a use
Has it been put! with its pure ore I made
An idol, living only on the breath
Of idol worshippers. Alas! that ever
Praise should have been what praise has been to me—
The opiate of the mind!

THE rosy shadows of evening had deepened into purple, and a soft, faint obscurity wrapped all surrounding objects; but Walter Maynard still hung over the scroll, on which he had at last begun to write. Composition, like every thing else, feels the influence of time. At first, all is poetry with the young poet; his heart is full of emotions eagerly struggling for utterance; every thing suggests the exercise of his own sweet art. A leaf, a flower, the star far off in the serene midnight, a look, a word, are enough for a poem. Gradually this profusion exhausts itself, the mind grows less fanciful, and poetry is rather a power than a passion. Feelings have hardened into thoughts, and the sensations of others are no longer almost as if they had been matter of experience. The world has become real, and we have become real along with it. Our own knowledge is now the material wherewith we work; and we have gathered a stock of recollections, bitter and pleasant, which now furnish the subjects that we once created: but these do not come at the moment's notice, like our former fantasies: we must be in the mood; and such mood comes but seldom to our worn and saddened spirits. Still, the "vision and the faculty divine" are never quite extinguished; the spiritual fire rises when all around is night, and the sad and tender emotion finds its old accustomed resource in music.

Such was now the case with Walter. The softening influence of the quiet garden, and the dreamy evening, had gradually subdued him. Scenes, long since forgotten, had been peopling his solitude with one still cherished image paramount over all; one young fair face, whose sweet eyes seemed to look upon him reproachfully: but his own words best show the weary spirit now disquieted within him,—

Faint and more faint amid the world of dreams,
That which once my all, thy image seems,
Pale as a star that in the morning gleams.

Long time that sweet face was my guiding star,
Bringing me visions of the fair and far,
Remote from the world's toil, and this world's jar.

Around it was an atmosphere of light,
Deep with the tranquil loveliness of night,
Subdued and shadowy, yet serenely bright.

Like to a spirit did it dwell apart,
Hushed in the sweetest silence of my heart,
Lifting me to the heaven from whence thou art.

Too soon the day broke on that haunted hour,
Loosing its spell, and weakening its power,
All that had been imagination's dower.

The noontide quenched that once enchanted ray;
Care, labour, sorrow, gathered on the day;
Toil was upon my steps, dust on my way.

They melted down to earth my upward wings;
I half forgot the higher, better things—
The hope which yet again thy image brings.

Would I were worthier of thee! I am fain,
Amid my life of bitterness and pain,
To dream once more my early dreams again.

Walter was disturbed by a low rap at the door. It was so indistinct and hesitating, that, at first, he thought himself mistaken; a second summons, however, led him to rise and open to his visiter. It was the very person that he foreboded—Mr. Curl. The gentleman stood for a moment, watching him close the door very reluctantly; and then took refuge, rather than a seat, in the window, having most ingeniously contrived to place two chairs, as a sort of barrier, between himself and his host. Walter resumed his place, and each kept silence for a few moments: a silence broken by Walter himself.

"I am afraid," said he.

"Afraid of what?" said Curl, looking round with an air of alarm.

Maynard subdued a smile and continued,—"I am afraid I have been a little too bitter about Sir Robert. Let me read to you one or two passages that I think would bear softening."

Curl's face lighted up; a gleam of satisfaction kindled his keen eyes. "No, no!" cried he, "never soften down any thing; least of all, what you say of a political opponent. As to reading your pamphlet, I never let my authors read to me. What they say is no business of mine; I only sell books: I neither have them read to me, nor do I read them. But giv me your papers; the press is waiting."

"Really, Mr. Curl," said Maynard, hesitating, "there is so much that I wish to add—"

"Very foolish," replied the publisher, "to add any think; keep it for the next time. Why should you do more for me than I ask? so give me the papers."

"They are not quite ready," answered Maynard.

"Not ready!" cried Curl.

"But you shall have them by six o'clock to-morrow," interrupted Walter; "you could not begin printing before. The fact is, I was worried and out of spirits this morning."

"The very time, of all others, to write," ejaculated his visiter; "being out of humour, which is what is usually called out of spirits—being out of humour with the whole world gives such zest to your spleen against individuals."

"I am sick of every thing and every body!" exclaimed Walter.

"Very likely," replied the other, calmly; so used I when I was young as you, and any thing went wrong with me. Now I know that it is of no use caring much, let wha will happen."

"I wish I could think the same," muttered his listener.

"I am very glad you do not," replied Curl; "for then you would be worth nothing."

"That is exactly what I am worth!" exclaimed Walter colouring. "The truth is, Mr. Curl, I cannot write when I am plagued about trifles; and a tiresome dun this morning put to flight every idea that I had in the world."

"Mr. Maynard," said the bookseller, in a solemn tone, "it is very wrong to run in debt."

"How can I help it?" returned Walter, pettishly.

"Let me advise you," continued the other, with the same solemnity, "never to have any article for which you cannot pay at the time. Expectations are the worst paymasters in the world."

"Well," cried Walter, "since you have taken upon yourself the office of advice, I hope you, also, mean to take that of as-

sistance. Now do, like a good creature, pay me at once for the pamphlet, which, I give you my honour as a gentleman, shall be in your hands by six o'clock to-morrow."

"Sir," said Curl, "what you ask is against my principles; you are in the second stage of authorship."

"What do you mean?" asked his auditor.

"I never object," was the answer, "to advancing money to the young writer commencing business; it encourages him, shows him what he may do; and, moreover, he is far the most anxious of the two to see himself in print. But when he publishes and succeeds, he fancies all money will be made as easily as he made the first; he begins to think much of his trouble, and has used up his first stock of ideas. Then I decline advancing money, because it is only want that makes him work. You are in the second stage!"

Walter coloured a yet deeper crimson; he was half inclined to throw papers and publisher out of the window, which was temptingly open. A moment passed, and he was pale as before; he felt that he had neither right nor cause for complaint, his own folly was alone to blame. "Well," said he, with a forced smile, "I, as a writer of moral essays and pamphlets for the 'good of my country,' ought not to object to principles; they certainly do turn a sentence admirably: but let us talk of something else. I am thinking of writing a comedy: 'The Lavinia,' of whom I predict great things, would turn every body's head as the coquette."

"The more like real life," replied Curl. "I always observe people's heads are turned, as they call it, by something that approaches as nearly to nothing as possible; but I have two other visits to pay, and must wish you good evening."

"Good evening," said Walter; and, bowing to his visiter, rose to open the door.

Curl hesitated on the threshold: then, suddenly turning round, he approached the table. "Mr. Maynard," said he, in a tone of voice very different to his usual hard and abrupt manner, "I do not see why I should keep to my principles any more than others. It is a weakness to like any body; but I like you—you are of a different order to those with whom I generally come in contact. You are going all wrong; you are pale and feverish; mind and body cannot stand the hard exercise to which you put them both: don't kill yourself: you'll like life better the longer you live. There's the money for the pam-

phlet: I know you will let me have it soon. Go to bed to-night."

The sound of the gold rang upon the table; but before the echo ceased, Curl was gone.

CHAPTER LVII.

A MATRIMONIAL TETE-A-TETE.

These are the things that fret away the heart—
Cold, careless trifles; but not felt the less
For mingling with the hourly acts of life.
It is a cruel lot for the fine mind,
Full of emotions generous and true,
To feel its light flung back upon itself;
All its warm impulses repelled and chilled,
Until it finds a refuge in disdain!
And woman, to whom sympathy is life,
The only atmosphere in which her soul
Developes all it has of good and true;
How must she feel the chill!

"How fond she was of flowers!" exclaimed Lady Marchmont, turning sadly away from a stand of choice plants, which Mrs. Courtenaye had sent her two days before her death; "there was a likeness between them—so frail, so fair, and doomed so soon to perish. She was too good to last; and I feel as if I had lost an angel from my side. I was always better when I had been with her."

A rap at the door of her closet interrupted her soliloquy.

"I thought," muttered she, "that I had given strict orders that no one should be admitted—well, come in!" and Lord Marchmont made his appearance, "The very person I most wished to see!" exclaimed Henrietta, starting up eagerly to receive him.

"My dear Lady Marchmont, your energy is positively startling," said he, slowly articulating his words, and deliberately seating himself in an arm-chair, which he moved twice; once to avoid the air from an open window, and next to avoid the sun.

His wife well knew that it was in vain to speak till he had finished his arrangements for his personal comfort; and she solaced her impatience by tearing a rose to pieces.

Lord Marchmont was about thirty years of age, and what is generally called a fine-looking man. His figure was good, as far as his height and proportion went; but his movements wanted ease, and, consequently, grace; and there was something of self-importance in his air—the last thing in the world to prepossess a beholder in his favour. We may admit the superiority of another, but we very much object to their assuming it as an undeniable fact. His features were high and good, with a strongly marked aquiline nose; but the mouth neither gave sweetness, nor the eye light, to his face. His eyes were of a cold dim blue, that never seemed to vary; they were unfamiliar with tears, and the pupil never brightened with laughter. His lips were thin, and, when they did smile, it was stiff, and made up, like the embroidery on his coat. His dress was splendid; his hands glittered with rings, his snuff-box was covered with diamonds, and his ruffles were of the finest Mechlin lace. The only fault was the want of harmony in colouring; the one hue destroyed the effect of the other. I am persuaded, that where there is no eye for colours, something of that keen susceptibility is wanting, which constitutes the poetical and picturesque; and, certainly, to neither of these qualities had his lordship the slightest claim. His style of conversation was made up of set sentences; and his manner, what his inferiors called overbearing, and his equals tiresome. His mind was made up of lessons and examples, he only reasoned by precedents; every thing with him went by example, and it was a relief to him when he could quote an authority. If he had a passion, it was love of money: he loved it both for its own sake—that close kind of attachment which money certainly does inspire—and also for the enjoyments that it could procure. He liked the pleasures of the table, and he liked attendance; he was a sort of Sublime Porte to his valets. Generally speaking, his comprehension was slow, and his ideas narrow; but the moment his own interest was concerned, it was astonishing how his perception enlarged: he became cautious, if not enlightened; and cunning, if not shrewd. In short, his character might be summed up in a word—Lord Marchmont was an intensely selfish man.

Being at length comfortably settled in his *fauteuil*, one foot balanced on a chair, and the other reposed on a stool, his snuff-box opened, and his perfumed handkerchief ready,—Henrietta thought that she might begin to speak.

"I wanted so much to see you," exclaimed she.

"Very flattering," replied his lordship, with a grave inclination.

"I have so much," continued she, "to talk to you about."

"Perhaps, madam," interrupted Lord Marchmont, in a slow and solemn tone, "you will accord me my privilege of speaking first. I have also much to say to you."

It was now Henrietta's turn to seek a comfortable position; and sinking back on the sofa, she began to pick another rose to pieces. To this his lordship paid no attention, he had a certain number of words to say, and the idea never crossed him but that they must be of paramount interest. He rarely looked at the person to whom he was talking; his glance dwelt either on his feet, or his hands, or his snuff-box—something, in short, that was more peculiarly his own; to say nothing of occasional glances at the looking-glass opposite. He talked as if he were reading aloud, and that in the most monotonous manner.

"It is my duty, madam, to tell you," he began, in a solemn tone, "that I exceedingly disapprove of your conduct."

Henrietta's colour rose. "This is the first time I have heard of it," exclaimed she; "if you—"

"Pray, madam, do not interrupt me," said Lord Marchmont; "you may be quite sure that I never make an assertion which I am not prepared to prove. I again repeat, that I exceedingly disapprove of your conduct, in which I am more surprised you should persist, as you are aware of my complete disapprobation."

"What have I done?" asked his listener.

"Again, madam, am I under the necessity of requesting that you will abstain from interruption. The petulance of your sex is especially shown in trifles. As I heard his Grace the Duke of Wharton observe, only yesterday,—'women never will listen.' This was his remark while we were walking in the Mall together; and I could not but be struck by its profound truth. I am not above being instructed, whatever, madam, you may think to the contrary.

Henriettata bit her lip to prevent herself from saying, that the task of intruction appeared to her, in this instance, a very hopeless one; and his lordship went on to observe,—

"I am sorry to see that, this morning even, you persist in disobeying me. I repeat that I entirely disapprove of your line of conduct."

"Why, what am I doing now but listening to you? Is that what you disapprove?"

"To listen to me, madam, is your duty: though," said he, in a voice growing every moment more solemn, "I regret to say, that you pay but little attention to it. Again I assert, that I have only too much reason to complain of your conduct."

END OF VOLUME I.